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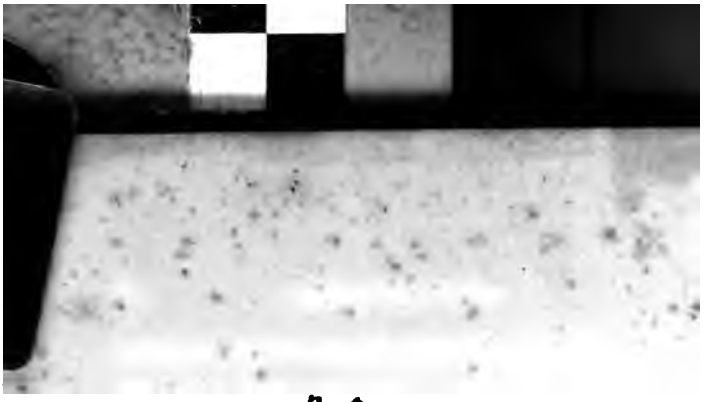
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HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

VOL. I.



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HENRY OF GUISE:

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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DEDICATION.

TO

THE HONOURABLE

FRANCIS SCOTT.

My dear Scott,

In dedicating to you the following work as the tribute of old friendship, and of sincere and well founded esteem, allow me to add a few words in explanation of the course I have pursued in the composition. I do this, it is true, more for the public than for yourself, as you were with me while it was in progress, and by your good judgment confirmed

my opinion of the mode in which the subject ought to be treated.

The character of every person who plays a prominent part on the great stage of the world is of course lauded by friends and decried by adversaries at the time, and the mingled report comes down to after ages. But the mists of prejudice are wafted away by the breath of years. The character of the historian is considered in connexion with those of the personages he has depicted; and allowances are made for errors and wrong views on all sides: the greater facts remain, in general, clear and distinct; and from these, together with those small traits which are rather let fall accidentally than recorded, by contemporaries, the estimate of history is formed.

There are some characters, however, which from various causes remain obscure and doubtful through all time; and many which have points in them that are never satisfactorily explained, producing acts which cannot be accounted for; like those waters which have never been fathomed, though we know not whether it be some under current that we see not, or the profound depth itself, which prevents the plumbed line from reaching the bottom. Amongst the many acts recorded in the annals of the world, the motives for which have never been ascertained, one of the most extraordinary is, that of Henry Duke of Guise, when, on the 12th of May, 1588, the famous day of the barricades, he had the crown of France within his grasp, and did not close his hand. Some have

called it weakness, some virtue, some moderation, some indecision; and in fact, whatever view we take of it, there are points in which it is opposed to the general character of the Duke.

In the account of this transaction, which I have given in the following pages, I have rather attempted to narrate how the event took place, than to put forth a theory regarding the motives. My own opinion is, indeed, fixed, after diligent examination of every contemporary account, that the motives were mixed. I do not believe that the Duke's moderation proceeded from indecision, for I imagine that he had decided from the first not to dethrone the King; but I do believe that he might be, and was, much tempted to usurp the throne, as the events of the day proceeded. Op-

portunity could not be without its temptation to a bold and ambitious heart like his. Whether he would have remained master of his own conduct, whether he would have been able to struggle against his own desires and the wishes of the people, whether he would have maintained his resolution to the end of that day, had the King not escaped from Paris, is another question. Suffice it that he resisted the temptation as long as the temptation existed; and that he did so deliberately is proved, by his strictly prohibiting the people from surrounding the royal residence, "lest it should commit him too far." Upon this view of the case have I based my narration.

In regard to the death of the Duke of Guise, I had but little difficulty; for the

event is so amply and minutely detailed by contemporaries, that no doubt can exist in regard to any of the facts. In the treatment of the story, however, I had to choose between two courses. A French writer, or writer of the French school, in order to concentrate the interest upon the Guise, would most likely have brought into a prominent point of view his criminal passion for Madame de Noirmoutier, and would have wrought it up with sentiment till the feelings of the reader were enlisted in favour of herself and the Duke.

I did not do this for two reasons. In the first place, it would have been a violation of history to represent Madame de Noirmoutier as any thing but a mere abandoned woman, as her amours with Henry IV. and others clearly show. In

the next place, I consider it an insult to virtue to endeavour to excite interest for vice. It was necessary, indeed, to introduce Madame de Noirmoutier, on account of the famous warning which she gave to Guise on the night before his death; but I have done so as briefly as possible for the reasons I have just stated.

I have only farther to say, that I know there is a French work bearing the same title, or very nearly the same title, as this. I have never seen that work, nor read any review of it, nor heard any part of its contents, and therefore have no idea whatsoever of how the story is there conducted. Doubtless very differently, and, perhaps, much better than in the following pages; but, nevertheless, I trust that the public will extend to them



the same indulgence which has been granted to my other works, and for which I am most sincerely grateful.

To you, my dear Scott, I am also very grateful, for many a happy hour, and many a pleasant day, and for many a trait which, in our mutual intercourse, has given me the best view of human nature, and added one to the few whom in this life we find to love and to respect. Accept, then, this very slight testimony of such feelings, and believe me ever,

Yours faithfully,

G. P. R. JAMES.

HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

CHAPTER I.

It was as dark and sombre a morning, the sky was as gloomy, the earth as dry and parched, as earth, sky, and morning ever appear in the most northern climates. A dull grey expanse of leaden cloud shut out the blue heaven, a hard black frost pinched up the ground, the blades of grass stood stiff and rugged on the frozen soil, and vague grey mists lay in all the hollows of the ground. The forests, the manifold forests that then spread over the fair land of France, showed nothing but bare branches, except where here and there the yoke-elm or

tenacious beech retained in patches its red and withered leaves, while beneath the trees again, the ground was thickly carpeted with the fallen honours of the past summer, mingled with hoar frost and thin snow. A chilliness more piercing than mere frost pervaded the air; and the aspect of the whole scene was cheerless and melancholy.

Such was the aspect of the day, though the scene was in the south of France, at a spot which we shall leave for the present nameless, when at about seven o'clock in the morning — an hour in which, at that period of the year, the sun's rays are weak and powerless — a tall, strong, florid man of about four-and-thirty years of age was seen upon the edge of a wide wood walking along cautiously step by step, carefully bending down his eyes upon the withered leaves that strewed his path, as if he had dropped something of value which he sought to find.

The wood, as we have said, was extensive, covering several miles of undulating ground, broken by rocks and dingles, and interspersed

by more than one piece of water. It contained various kinds of tree, as well as various sorts of soil; but at the spot of which we now speak the wood was low and thin, gradually increasing in volume as it rose along the slope of the adjacent hill, till it grew into a tangled thicket, from which rose a number of tall trees, waving their grey branches sadly in the wintry air. On a distant eminence, rising far above the wood itself, might be seen towers, and turrets, and pinnacles, the abode of some of the lords of the land; and at the end of a long glade, up which the man we have just mentioned was cautiously stealing, as we have described, appeared a little cottage with one or two curious outbuildings, not usually found attached to the abodes of the agricultural population.

The features of this early wanderer in the woods were good, the expression of his countenance frank; and though poring so intently upon the ground as he passed, there was nevertheless an air of habitual cheerfulness in his countenance, which broke out in the frequent smile, either at something passing in his own thoughts,

or at something he observed amongst the withered leaves. He was dressed in a plain suit of dark brownish grey, with a cap and feather on his head, a sword by his side, and an immense winding horn slung under his left arm; and though at the present moment he was without either horses or dogs, his whole dress and appearance bespoke him one of the huntsmen of some neighbouring lord.

After having walked on for about three or four hundred yards, he suddenly stopped at some traces on the ground, turned into the wood, which in a particular line seemed disturbed and broken, and following the marks, which denoted that some large object of the chase had passed that way, he reached the thicker part of the wood, where, to use his own expression, he felt sure that the boar was lodged.

It would be useless and tedious to accompany him in all the perquisitions that he made round the thicket, in order to ascertain that the animal had not again issued forth from its woody covert. He satisfied himself, however, completely, that such was not the case, and then paused, musing

for a moment or two, till he was roused from his reverie by the distant sounds of human voices and of horses' feet, coming from the side of the glade in which we have first displayed him to the reader's eyes. He now hurried back as rapidly as possible, and in a minute or two after stood uncovered in the midst of a gay and glittering party, on which we must pause for a few minutes, ere we proceed to describe the events of that morning.

There were about twenty persons present, but the greater number consisted of various attendants attached to the household of all French noblemen of that period, under the names of grooms, piqueurs, valets de chiens, chefs de relais, &c. Three out of the group, however, are worthy of greater attention, not alone because they were higher in rank, but because with them we shall have to deal throughout the course of this tale, while most of the others may well be forgotten. The eldest of the three, bore the robe of an ecclesiastic, though in his deportment, as he sat a spirited, and somewhat fretful horse, he seemed fully as

well suited to play the part of a gay cavalier as that of a sober churchman.

His features were fine, though not strongly marked; the nose straight and well cut; the chin rounded; the brow broad and high, and the mouth well formed. But with all these traits of beauty, there were one or two drawbacks, both in feature and expression, which rendered his aspect by no means so prepossessing as it otherwise might have been. The eyes, which were remarkably fine, large, dark, and powerful, were sunk deep under the sharp cut, overhanging brow, looking keenly out from below their long fringed lids, as if in ambush for each unguarded glance or gesture of those with whom he conversed. The lips, though, as we have said, well formed, closed tight over the teeth, which were as white as snow, never suffering them to appear, except when actually speaking. Even then those lips parted but little, and gave one the idea of their being, as it were, the gates of imprisoned thoughts, which opened no farther than was necessary to give egress to those which they were forced to

set at liberty. The nostril, though it was finely shaped, was even stiller and more motionless than the lips. No moment of eagerness, no excited passion of the bosom, made that nostril expand, and if it ever moved at all, it was but when a slight irrepressible sneer upon the lip drew it up with a scornful elevation, not the less cutting because it was but slight.

The age of this personage at the time we speak of might be about forty-five; and if one might judge by the clear paleness of his complexion, a considerable portion of his life had been spent in intense study. The marks of his age were visible, too, in his beard and mustachios, which had once been of the deepest black, but were now thickly grizzled with grey. No sign, however, of any loss of strength or vigour was apparent; and though still and quiet in his demeanour, he seemed not at all disinclined to show, by an occasional exercise of strength or agility, that stillness and quietude were with him matters of choice and not of necessity. He kept his horse a very small pace behind those of his two younger companions; but he so contrived

it that this very act of deference should not have the slightest appearance of humility in it, but should rather seem an expression of what he owed to his own age and character rather than to their superior rank.

The other two were both young men in the very early outset of life, and were so nearly of the same age, that it was difficult to say which was the elder. Both were extremely handsome, both were very powerfully and gracefully formed; and the most extraordinary similarity of features and of frame existed between them, so that it would have been difficult to distinguish the one from the other, had it not been that their complexions were entirely different. The one was dark, the other fair: in one the hair curled over the brow in large masses, as glossy as the wing of the raven; in the other, the same profuse and shining hair existed, but of a nut brown, with every here and there a gleam as if the sun shone upon it. The eyes of the one were dark, but flashing and lustrous; the eyes of the other of a deep hazel, and in them there mingled, with the

bright bold glances of fearless courage, an occasional expression of depth and tenderness of feeling, which rendered the character of his countenance as different from that of his brother as was his complexion.

Notwithstanding the great similarity that existed between them, they were not, as may have been supposed, twins, the fairer of the two being a year younger than his brother. They were both, indeed, as we have said, in their early youth, but their youth was manly; and though neither had yet seen three-and-twenty years, the form of each was powerful and fully developed, and the slight pointed beard and sweeping mustachio were as completely marked as the custom of the day admitted.

On the characters of the two we shall not pause in this place, as they will show themselves hereafter; and it is sufficient to say that there was scarcely a little word, or action, or gesture, which did not more or less display a strong and remarkable difference between the hearts and minds of the two. During their whole life, hitherto, notwithstanding this dif-

ference, they had lived in the utmost friendship and regard, without even any of those occasional quarrels which too often disturb the harmony of families. Perhaps the secret of this might be that the elder brother had less opportunity of domineering over the younger than generally existed in the noble families of France, for their mother had been an heiress of great possessions, and according to the tenour of her contract of marriage with their father, her feofs and riches fell on her death to her second son, leaving him, if any thing, more powerful and wealthy than his elder brother.

The fortune of neither, however, though each was large, was of such great extent as to place them amongst the few high and powerful families who at that time struggled for domination in the land of their birth. The territory of each could bring two or three hundred soldiers into the field in case of need: the wealth of each sufficed to place them in the next rank to the governor of the province which they inhabited; but still their names stood not on the same list with those of Epernon, Joyeuse,

Montmorency, Guise, or Nemours; and, contented hitherto with the station which they enjoyed, neither they themselves, nor any of their ancestors, had striven to obtain for their house a distinction which, in those times, was, perhaps, more perilous than either desirable or honourable. Neither of them, indeed, was without ambition, though that ambition was, of course, modified by their several characters; but it had been controlled hitherto, perhaps, less by the powers of their own reason than by the influence of the personage who now accompanied them, and whom we have before described.

Not distantly connected with them by the ties of blood, the Abbé de Boisguerin had been called from Italy, where he had long resided, to superintend their education shortly after their mother's death. His own income, though not so small as that of many another scion of a noble house in France, had, nevertheless, proved insufficient through life to satisfy a man of expensive, though not very ostentatious, tastes and habits; and the large emoluments, offered to

him, together with the prospects of advancement which the station proposed held out, induced him without hesitation to quit his residence in Rome, and revisit a country, the troublous state of which gave the prospect of advancement to every daring and unscrupulous spirit.

It may seem strange to say, as we have said, that the influence of an ambitious man had been directed to check their ambition: but he was ambitious only for the attainment of certain ends. He valued not power merely as power, but for that which power might command. Personal gratification was his object, though the pursuit of that gratification, as far as the objects of sense went, was also restrained, like his ambition, by other qualities and feelings. Thus, as an ambitious man, at the time we speak of, he was neither fierce nor grasping; as an epicurean, he was not coarse nor insatiable; and yet with all this apparent — nay, real, moderation — there lay within his breast, unexcited and undeveloped, passions as strong and fierce, desires as eager and as fiery, as ever

burned within the heart of man. He controlled them by skill and habit, he covered them, as it were, with the dust and ashes of his profession, but it needed only an accidental breath to blow them into a flame, which, in turn, would have given fire to every other aspiration and effort of his mind.

He had found it in no degree difficult to obtain a complete ascendency over the minds of the two young men he was called upon to govern. Their father had plunged deeply, after his wife's death, into the wars and troubles of the times, and he left his two sons entirely to the care and direction of the Abbé de Boisguerin. Thus he had every opportunity that he could desire; and he brought to the task most extensive learning, which enabled him to direct in every thing the inferior teachers. His manners were graceful, polished, and captivating, his temper calm and unruffled: hiding his own thoughts and feelings under an impenetrable veil, never alluding to his past life or his future purposes, he skilfully, nay, almost imperceptibly, made himself master of the con-

fidence of others, and gained every treasured secret of the hearts around him, without giving any thing in exchange. His learning, his wisdom, his acuteness, his impenetrability, won respect and reverence, and almost awe, from the two youths yet in their boyhood: his courtesy, his kindness, his consideration for the errors and the desires of their youth, gained greatly upon their regard; and their admiration and love was increased by some events which took place towards their seventeenth and sixteenth years.

It happened that about that time their master of arms was teaching them some of the exercises of the day in the tilt-yard of the castle; while their governor, with his arms folded on his breast, stood looking on. He usually, under such circumstances, refrained from making any observations; but, thrown for a moment off his guard on the present occasion, by what appeared to him an awkwardness on the part of the master in teaching some evolution, he said courteously enough, that he thought it might be executed better in another manner.

Conceited and rash, the master of arms replied with a show of contempt. The Abbé then persisted; and the other, with a sneer, begged that he might be experimentally shown the new method of the governor. The churchman smiled slightly, threw off his gown, mounted one of the horses with calm and quiet grace, and with scarcely a change of feature, or any other appearance of unusual exertion, displayed his own superiority in military exercises, and foiled the master of arms with his own weapons. Ever after that, from time to time, he mingled in the sports and pastimes of the young men, never losing sight of his own dignity, but showing sufficient skill, address, and boldness to make them look up to him in the new course to which their attention was now directed by the customs of the age.

The Abbé de Boisguerin, however, did not suffer their whole attention to be occupied by those military exercises, which formed the chief subject of study with the young nobility of the day. He had caused them at an earlier period to be instructed deeply in the more elegant and

graceful studies: he had endeavoured to implant in their minds a fondness for letters, for poetry, for music. Drawing, too, and painting, then rising into splendour from the darkness which had long covered it, were pointed out to their attention, as objects of admiration and interest for every fine and elevated mind; and while no manly sport or science was omitted, the many moments of unfilled time that then hung heavy on the hands of other youths in France were by them filled up with occupations calculated to polish, to expand, and to dignify their minds.

As far as this had gone, every thing that the Abbé de Boisguerin had done was calculated to raise him in the esteem of his pupils; and when, on the death of their father, they found that their preceptor had been appointed to remain with them till the law placed their conduct in their own hands, they both rejoiced equally and sincerely.

It may be asked, however, whether, of the two brothers, the Abbé had himself a favourite, and whether he was better beloved by the one

than by the other? Still wise and cautious in all his proceedings, his demeanour displayed no great predilection to either. No ordinary eye could see: they themselves could not detect, by any outward sign, that one possessed a particle more of his regard than the other, and both were towards him equally attentive, affectionate, and respectful. But there was one peculiarity in his method of dealing with them, and in the effect that it produced upon either, which showed to himself, and unwittingly showed to one, which was the character best calculated to assimilate with his own.

It more than once happened, nay, indeed, it often happened, that in order to induce them to arrive at the same conclusion with himself, or to lead them to do that which their passions, prejudices, or weaknesses made them unwilling to do, he would address himself, not directly to their reason or to their heart, but to their vanity, their pride, their prejudices: he would politicly combat one error with another: he would not exactly assail what he knew to be wrong, but would undermine it; and when he

had conquered, and they were satisfied that he was right in the result, he would then point, with a degree of smiling and good-humoured triumph, to the subtle means which he had employed to lead them to his purpose.

The elder brother would sometimes be angry at having been so led; but yet he took a certain pleasure in the skill with which it was done, and more than once endeavoured to give the Abbé back art for art. He strove to lead his younger brother by the same means, and more than once succeeded. The younger, however, on his part, showed no anger at having been led, if he were fully convinced that the object was right. He never attempted, however, to practise the same; and as he grew up, when any act of the kind was particularly remarkable in the Abbé, or in his brother, it threw him into musings more serious than those which he usually indulged in. If it diminished his regard for either, he did not suffer that result to appear; and when he reached the period at which his mother's estates were given into his own hands, he eagerly besought the preceptor

to remain with them, and insured to him an income far beyond that which any thing but deep affection and regard required him to bestow.

The interest of their father had before his death obtained for the Abbé de Boisguerin the office of a bishopric; but the Abbé had declined it — perhaps, as many another man has done, with more ambition than moderation in the refusal — and he had continued to remain with his pupils, increasing and extending his influence over them, up to the moment at which we have placed them before the reader. He had carefully withheld them, however, from mingling in that world of which they as yet knew little or nothing, and in which his influence was likely to be lost, looking forward to that period at which the circumstances of the times should — as he saw they were likely to do — render the support of the two young noblemen so indispensable to some one of the great parties then struggling for supreme power, that they might command any thing which he chose to dictate as the price of adhesion.

Such was their state at the period which we

have chosen for opening this tale. But there was another point in their state which it may be necessary to mark. They were not themselves at all aware of their own characters and dispositions; nor was any one else, except the clear-sighted and penetrating man who had dwelt so long with them; and he could only guess, for all the world of passions within the bosoms of each had as yet slumbered in their youthful idleness, like Samson in the lap of Delilah; but they were speedily to be roused.

The dress of each requires but little comment, as it was the ordinary hunting dress of the period, and was only remarkable for a good deal of ornament, denoting, perhaps, a little taste for finery, which might be passed over in youth. Of the two, perhaps the younger brother displayed less gold and embroidery upon his green doublet and riding coat. His boots, too, made, as usual, of untanned leather, displayed no gold tassels at the sides; though his moderation in these respects might be in some degree atoned by the length of the tall single feather in his riding cap.

Such were the principal persons of the group which rode into the green alley or glade that we have described in the wood; and the rest, amounting to some twenty in number, comprised attendants of all sorts in the glittering and many-coloured apparel of that time.

CHAP. II.

Did all that are hunted in this world — whether the chase be carried on by care, or villany, or sorrow, by our own passions, or by the malevolence of our fellow-men — did all that are hunted in this world obtain as loud and clear an intimation that the pursuit is up and stirring, as the wild boar which had been tracked to its covert then had, we might have a better chance than this world generally affords us of making our escape in time, or, at least, of preparing for defence.

Much was the noise, great the gingling and the tramp, the whining of impatient dogs, the chiding of surly foresters, the loud laugh and gay jest of their masters, in the glen of the wood within three or four hundred yards of the thicket in which the boar lay sleeping. He woke not with the sounds, however, or, at all events, he noticed them not, while the preparations went on for

putting his easy life in the brown forest to a close.

"Well, Gondrin," exclaimed the elder of the two brothers, Gaspar, Marquis of Montsoreau —"Well, Gondrin, have you made sure of our beast? is he lodged safely?"

"As safe as an ox in his stall," replied the huntsman, whom we have seen tracking the steps of the wild boar over the crisp frost-covered leaves of winter. "He has his lair in the thicket there, my Lord, and, as near as I can guess, he is but a hundred yards in. If you go round by the back of the cottage, and station two relays, one on the hill of Dufay, and the other on the bank of the river by the bridge of Neufbourg, you will have a glorious chase; for he can take no other way but down the glen, and then crossing the high road by the river, must run all the way up the valley, and stand at bay amongst the rocks at the end."

"Beautifully arranged, Gondrin, beautifully arranged," cried the younger brother, Charles of Montsoreau, Count of Logères; but his elder brother instantly interrupted him, exclaiming,

"But have you not netted the thicket, Gondrin?"

"No, my Lord," replied the huntsman; "Count Charles said the other day he loved to give the beasts a chance, and lodged as the boar is, you would miss the run, for then he must turn at bay in the thicket and be killed immediately."

"It matters not, it matters not," replied Gaspar de Montsoreau. "If Charles like it, so let it be; and yet I love to see the huge beast darting from side to side, and floundering in the nets he did not think of. There is a pleasure in so circumventing him."

"It is not too late yet," said the fine rich musical voice of the Abbé de Boisguerin. "The nets can be speedily brought, and the thicket enclosed."

"Oh no," cried both brothers at once: "we have no such patience, you know, good friend. Send down the relays, Gondrin, and let us begin the sport at once."

"I will go round to the left of the thicket with my men," continued the younger brother,

"and will keep the hill-side as well as if there were all the nets in the world. You, Gaspar, keep this side and the little lane behind the cottage."

"And what shall I do?" demanded the Abbé with a smile. "I must not show myself backward in your sports, Charles, so I will go with Gondrin here, and some of the piqueurs, and force the grizzly monarch of the forest in his hold."

The matter being thus determined, the relays were sent down, and the parties separated for their several stations, Gondrin saying to his younger lord as they went round, "If I sound one mot on my horn, sir, the boar is making his rush towards you; if I sound two, he is taking towards the Marquis; but if I sound three, be sure that he is going down the valley, as I said, and must take to the rocks, for he has no chance any other way but by the ford, which he won't take, unless hard pressed."

"I will go straight round by the ford and turn him," replied his young lord. "Then we make sure of him altogether, Gondrin."

Thus saying, he rode quickly on and took

his station on the hill, where an open space gave him room to plant his men around so as to meet the boar at any point of the ascent, in case the beast turned in that direction and endeavoured to plunge into the depths of the forest.

Some time was allowed to elapse, in order to give the relays time to reach their stations, and then, from the western side of the thicket, were heard the cries and halloos of the huntsmen, as they themselves plunged into the wood, and encouraged the dogs to attack the boar in his lair. For a short space, the hounds themselves were mute; but, in about five minutes, they seemed to have got upon the boar's scent, who had moved onward, roused by the cries of the hunters, and a loud long opening burst announced that they had come upon his track. A minute afterwards, a single note was heard from the horn of the huntsman, and the grey form of the boar glanced for a moment past one of the gaps in the wood where the younger of the brothers had stationed himself; but the beast plunged in again immediately, and a piercing yell from one of the dogs seemed to

show that he had passed through the midst of the hounds, taking vengeance upon them as he went for disturbing his quiet. Shortly after, the horn of Gondrin gave the signal that the boar was rushing down the valley. Charles of Montsoreau paused to be quite sure, but the three notes were sounded again after a moment's silence, and, setting spurs to his horse, he galloped on like lightning to interrupt the boar, and turn him at the ford. The loud cries of the dogs in full chase were sufficient to show him that he was right in the direction he had taken till he issued forth from the wood, and after that he could see with his own eyes the whole scene of the boar's flight, and the pursuit through the open country into which the beast was now driven.

Galloping on with all the eagerness and impetuosity of youth, he made at once for the ford; now catching wide views of the landscape as he passed over the side of some open hill, now losing the whole again as he plunged amidst the leafless vineyards or woods. The country around was thus hidden from his sight, and

he could see nothing but the dull dry stems of the vines, in a low sloping hollow through which he passed, or a few mottled patches of darker cloud upon the dull grey sky overhead — when suddenly his ear caught the sound of distant fire-arms, and he drew up his horse in no small surprise.

The situation of the country, indeed — the wars that were taking place in almost every part of France — the general disorganisation of society, which throughout almost the whole land changed the peasant into the soldier, either for the purposes of plunder or self-defence — might be supposed to have rendered such sounds not at all unfamiliar to his ear; and, in truth, two years before he would have shown no sign of astonishment to have heard a whole park of artillery roaring in the direction from which he now heard the sound of a few scattered shots. Since, then, however, the tide of warfare had been turned in another direction. In the secluded spot in which he dwelt, few visits from occasional marauders were to be apprehended: the peasantry had returned to their

labours, and no news of any kind from the distant provinces had given reason to suppose that the scourge of civil war was again likely to afflict that part of the country. Some precautions, indeed, had been necessary to keep down petty feuds and plundering excursions amongst some of the inferior gentry and partisans in the neighbourhood; and the two young noblemen had been called upon to practise some of the most important duties of their station, in maintaining, as far as possible, peace and tranquillity around them.

After pausing, then, for a moment, to listen, Charles of Montsoreau, judging that the sounds he heard proceeded from some new infraction of the law, rode on, determined, as soon as he had finished the all-important business of the chase, to investigate the matter more thoroughly, and to punish the aggressors. All these fine resolutions, however, were changed in a moment; for almost as soon as they were formed he emerged from the vineyard through which he had been passing, entered upon the open side of the hill, and a scene was presented to his eyes which

excited other and somewhat more painful feelings in his bosom.

Although the point on which he stood was not particularly high, the view was extensive and uninterrupted by any very near object. The valley through which the stream wound was about a mile and a half in breadth, and five or six miles in length; along the whole extent of which the high road was visible, with the exception of a few hundred yards here and there, where a rock, or a peasant's house, or a water-mill by the side of the stream, interrupted the view. At the distance of somewhat more than half a mile lay the bridge over the stream, and half way between it and the spot where the young gentleman stood, appeared one of the large, heavy, wide-topped carriages of the day, drawn by six horses, and driving along at a furious rate, as if in full flight. The driver was lashing his horses with furious eagerness; but ever and anon he turned his head to look behind towards the bridge, where a scene appeared, which showed his anxiety to quicken his pace to be not at all unnatural.

Half upon the bridge and half upon the road, on the nearer side of the stream, appeared a very small body of horsemen, apparently not more than seven or eight in number, contending fiercely with a larger body, as if to give time for the persons in the carriage to escape; and from that spot, rolling up in white wreaths amongst the yellow banks and cold green wintry slopes of scanty herbage, curled the white smoke, occasioned by the discharge of fire-arms. At the distance of about a mile and a half beyond, again, was seen coming up, with headlong speed, a still larger body of cavalry; and it was evident, that at the rate with which the latter were advancing, the carriage and its denizens, if such were the object of their pursuit, would not be very long before they were overtaken.

It is a pleasant weakness in young and generous minds to seek in all strifes the defence of the weaker, even when we do not know whether the cause that we thus espouse be or be not the just one. Charles of Montsoreau paused but for a moment, and then rode down towards the carriage as fast as possible, fol-

lowed by his attendants. The coachman showed great unwillingness to stop; but he had no power of resisting the command which he received to do so, and accordingly, as soon as it was repeated, obeyed. But, at the same moment, the head of an elderly lady, apparently of some rank, was thrust forth from between the curtains of the vehicle, uttering various not very coherent sentences, and displaying in every line and feature indubitable marks of great fear and trepidation.

Brought up in the habit of chivalrous courtesy, the young nobleman instantly raised his cap, and bowing low, asked if he could render her any service. His words were few and simple, but there was great encouragement in his air; and the lady replied, "Oh! for Heaven's sake, do not stop us, young gentleman. We have been basely betrayed by one of our servants into an ambush of the King of Navarre's reiters, who seek to make us prisoners, and Heaven only knows what may become of us if they succeed."

"If the reiters be those that are following

you," said the young nobleman, "there is no earthly possibility of your escaping them, madam, except by taking refuge in the château of Montsoreau hard by. I will give your coachman directions, and then go down and help to disentangle your attendants, who seem to be contending gallantly with superior numbers on the bridge."

"A thousand and a thousand thanks, young gentleman," replied the lady. "But how," she added, with a look of uncertainty, "but how can we tell that we shall be kindly received at Montsoreau, and shall not, perhaps, be treated as prisoners there also?"

"By my promise, madam," replied the young gentleman with a smile, "I am Charles of Montsoreau, the Marquis's brother: will you trust yourself to my word?"

"Most willingly," she said; and turning to the coachman, the young gentleman added, "Drive on with all speed till the road divides, then take the left-hand road up the hill and through the wood; demand admittance, in my name, at the castle, if I should not have come

up in time. But I shall have overtaken you before then. Now, speed on, and spare not your beasts, for the way is not long, if you be diligent."

Thus saying, he again bowed low and rode on, and in a very few minutes had reached the spot where the contention was taking place between the party of light-armed servants attending upon the carriage and the heavy armed reiters.

The young nobleman was not unwilling to signalise himself by any deed of arms that might fall in his way; but on the present occasion no great opportunity was afforded him, for the numbers he brought to the assistance of the servants appeared so formidable in the eyes of the other party who were already engaged in the fray, that they hastened to draw back for the purpose of waiting in security the arrival of their comrades; and the only event which took place worth noting was the action of the commander of the reiters then present, who turned deliberately as he retreated, and fired his pistol at the head of the young nobleman with so

position upon the bridge, supported by nothing but his own attendants. The servant whom he had despatched to his brother reached the ford and crossed it, without any attempt on the part of the reiters to interrupt him. He then galloped on in the direction of the rocks, at full speed; and Charles of Montsoreau having seen him, as far as he could judge, in safety, turned his horse, and rode after the carriage and its followers.

In the mean time, while these events were taking place, on one side of the valley the boar, following the plan that the huntsman Gondrin had laid out for him, pursued the course of the stream, and though chased by the dogs in full cry, paused not, and turned not, till at the water-mill a fierce watch-dog rushed out upon him, and received in return a wound from one of the beast's sharp tusks, which laid him dying upon the road. This little incident did not stop the fierce animal for an instant; but it seemed to confuse him, and made him turn from the direct course he was pursuing sooner than he otherwise would have done. He doubled once before

the hounds almost like a hare, and then darting up one of the narrow passes to the right, led hounds and huntsmen a considerable distance from the spot where the chase first commenced, before he was finally driven into the valley of rocks, from which there was no outlet, and where he was, consequently, obliged to stand at bay.

The way that he took led the main body of the huntsmen, with the young lord of Montsoreau and the Abbé of Boisguerin, into a track, from which the other side of the valley was not visible; and their own eagerness, the cries of the numerous dogs, and the shouts and halloos of the huntsmen, prevented them from hearing those sounds which had attracted the attention of Charles of Montsoreau. When the Abbé and the Marquis arrived, they found the noble boar already brought to bay by the dogs, and defending himself stoutly against his enemy. Two of the hounds were already sprawling in their blood beneath his feet, and the Marquis sprang to the ground to put an end to the strife as soon as possible.

Nothing extraordinary occurred to mark

the event of the chase. The boar, like one of those unfortunate men that we sometimes see in the world, upon whom every sort of misfortune falls one after another, torn by the dogs, assailed by the huntsmen, confused by the clamour, was soon killed amongst them; and Gaspar, whose hand had performed the actual deed, executed all the usual offices of the hunter upon that occasion, and stepping out the boar's length, declared that it was one of the finest brutes that he had ever slain.

"I wonder where Charles is," he exclaimed, as soon as the whole was completed. "He must have missed us at the turn by the water-mill."

And thus saying, he gazed down the valley of rocks, through the opening of which might be seen a part of the other valley, with the wood from which the boar had been forced, and the grey towers of the château of Montsoreau rising upon the hill beyond. A single horseman appeared coming up the valley, at the distance of about half a mile; but as the young marquis gazed in the direction of the castle, his eye

was suddenly attracted by a quick flash which seemed to dart from one of the embrasures, and almost at the same instant a white cloud of smoke enveloped the top of the principal tower. After a short interval, the loud booming report of a cannon made itself heard, and another, and another flash issued forth from the embrasures on the side which commanded the road, while the cloud of smoke around the castle grew deeper and more extensive; and the repeated roar of the cannon gave notice to the country round that war had returned to disturb the peace which had reigned in those valleys for the last two years.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed the Marquis, turning towards the Abbé — "What can be the meaning of all this?"

"Why, simply," replied the Abbé, "I suppose some unexpected attack upon the castle, and that your brother Charles has thrown himself into it, and is firing upon the enemy. But, if I mistake not, this man coming up at such speed is his piqueur Martin. He rides to us with news, depend upon it."

The man soon conveyed to them his own tale, and added the information, that, as far as he could judge from the backward looks that he had cast as he rode along, the body of reiters who had followed in pursuit of the carriage amounted at least to the number of two hundred. The situation of the Marquis and his companions was now in some degree embarrassing; for their party was far too small to afford a hope of forcing their way into the château at once, if opposed by the superior force which the man described. Measures were, therefore, immediately taken, for calling the peasantry around to arms; and such was the military and enterprising spirit of the day, that you would have thought from the alacrity with which the pike was grasped, and the steel-cap put on, that some joyful occasion called the good countrymen forth from their homes, and not a matter of peril and strife.

In the course of about two hours, more than forty men had collected in the valley of rocks; and with this small force, Gaspar de Montsoreau prepared to force his way into the château,

though the Abbé de Boisguerin still remonstrated with him on the smallness of the number, and advised him to wait for further support. As they were discussing the matter, however, the huntsman Gondrin stepped forward, and, with a low inclination of the head, addressed his lord.

"I think, sir," he said, "if you would let me guide you, I could bring you through the wood to the postern under the rock, without these German vagabonds catching the least sight of your march; and at that postern, you know, defended by the guns of the château, you could defy the whole world till the postern is opened."

"How do you propose to do it, Gondrin?" demanded the Abbé, scarcely giving the young lord time to reply.

"Why, I mean," replied the man, "to go round under the hill to the road between the deep banks, which would cover a whole troop of men at arms, much less a small body, such as we have here. That leads us straight into the wood behind my house; and then there is the path which I always follow myself in coming up to the

château. It never leaves the covert of the wood till it reaches the postern, or at least the little green that opens before it."

"Oh, Gondrin is right, Gondrin is right," exclaimed the young marquis. "He is always sure of his way. Lead on, Gondrin: keep about twenty yards in front, and we will follow as orderly as we can. But some one bring along the boar! we must not leave the boar behind!"

The march was then commenced; and the only farther observation that was made upon the proposed course proceeded from the Abbé de Boisguerin, who said in a low voice to the young nobleman, "My only reason for questioning Gondrin so closely was, that he has always shown a much greater fondness for your brother than yourself, as you must often have observed; and I thought he might lead us all into greater peril than needful, in his zealous eagerness to succour Charles."

The Marquis did not reply, but rode on thoughtfully; and yet, upon words as light as those, have often been built up in this world

rancours and jealousies never afterwards extinguished. In the present instance, indeed, and at the present moment, the effect went no further than to make Gaspar of Montsoreau ask himself, "I wonder why Gondrin should love my brother better than myself? and yet I have remarked he does so."

As they marched on, the sound of the cannon was still heard from time to time; but at length, as they entered the wood, it ceased, and was heard no more. After threading the narrow path by which Gondrin led them, they issued forth upon a green slope beneath an angle of the rock on which the château stood. The chief road leading to the castle was visible from that point; but no body of reiters was now to be seen there; and the moment that they were perceived and recognised from the battlements, glad shouts and gestures from the retainers on the walls gave them to understand that the enemy had thought fit to abandon their object, and retreat. Perhaps Gaspar of Montsoreau was not quite satisfied that the defence should have been made and the enemy frustrated by his

younger brother; but his heart was still sufficiently pure and upright to make him angry with himself on detecting such sensations in his bosom.

CHAP. III.

THOSE who have never lived amongst strange and stirring events, those who have never been accustomed to hourly danger, and to continual change, form no idea of the ease with which the human mind reconciles itself to the various rapid alternations of our fate, and how soon the habit of enterprise, excitement and hazard, produces an appetite for the very things that would seem abhorrent to our nature.

The incident of the appearance of the reiters in that part of the country, of their attack upon the château of Montsoreau, and of the absence of its lord at the moment, might have ended by the capture and burning of the castle, and by the massacre of all within its walls. But the moment that it was over, the Marquis and his train rode in, and springing from his horse, he entered the hall, laughing gaily at the

perilous events just past. Fnding no one there but some servants, he next proceeded to a part of the building which was called the Lady's Bower, where he was informed his brother now was, with the guests who had so unexpectedly taken refuge in the château. He was followed thither by the Abbé de Boisguerin, and on entering they found a scene which — though of no very stirring character — we must attempt to paint for the reader's eye.

The lady's bower was a large, lightsome chamber in one of those towers of the château which was least likely to be exposed to the fire of artillery in case of attack — for we must remember that every nobleman's house in that day was built chiefly with a view to defence, and was in fact a regular fortress, as far as the science of the time could render it so. The windows of the bower looked over the most abrupt part of the hill on which the castle stood, and, beyond that, upon the wide woods, that, sweeping away down into the valley, covered an extent of many miles of low and gently undulating ground, which afforded no eminence whatsoever, within

cannon shot, that was not completely commanded by the castle itself. The bower had also the advantage of being on the sunny side of the building, turned away from the cold north, and from the east, and looking to the land of summer, and to the point where the splendid sun went down after his daily course. On the day that we have mentioned, indeed, the great light-giver vouchsafed but few of his beams to the world below; but in the huge fire-place of the lady's bower, which was furnished with its comfortable seats all round, blazed up a pile of logs, giving heat sufficient to the whole room, to compensate for the absence of the sun.

At a little distance from the fire was collected a group of persons, of which the graceful and dignified form of Charles of Montsoreau was the first that caught the eye. He was standing with his hunting cap in his hand — the long plume of which swept the floor — and was bending in an attitude of much grace to speak with a lady who was seated in a large arm-chair, and who, looking up in his face, was listening with apparently great

interest to all that he was saying. That lady, however, was not the one who had spoken to him from the carriage. She, indeed, sat near, while three or four female attendants, who had come with her in the vehicle, stood behind. But the lady to whom Charles of Montsoreau was speaking was altogether of a different age, and of a different appearance.

She was apparently not above nineteen or twenty years of age, and certainly very beautiful, although her beauty was not altogether of that sparkling and brilliant kind which attracts attention at once. The features, it is true, were all good; the skin fair, soft, and delicate; the figure exquisitely formed, and full of grace; but there were none of those brilliant contrasts of colouring that are remarkable even at a distance. There was no flashing black eye, full of fire and light; the colour on the cheek, though that cheek was not pale, was pure and delicate; the hair was of a light glossy silken brown, and the soft liquid hazel eyes, screened by their long lashes, and fine cut eyelids, required to be seen near, and to be marked well, before all the beautiful depth

and fervour of their expression could be fully perceived. There was one thing, however, which was seen at once, which was the great loveliness of the mouth and lips, every line of which spoke sweetness and gentleness, but not without firmness — tenderness, in short, gaining rather than losing from resolution. Those lips were altogether peculiar to the race and family to which she was — not very remotely — related; and it was to their peculiar form and expression, that was owing that ineffable smile which is said to have borne no slight part in the charm that rendered her nearest male relative at that moment all-powerful over the hearts of men, made him, Henry of Guise, more a king in France than the sovereign of the land — at least as far as the affections of the people went — and which had added the crowning grace to the beauty of the unfortunate Mary Stuart.

The dress in which this fair girl was clothed was that in which she had been travelling, and consequently there was but little ornament of any kind about it; and yet the blood of the princely Guises spoke out in every move-

ment and in every attitude, too plainly for any one to have mistaken her for aught but what she was, had she been dressed even in the garb of a peasant.

The elder lady, clothed altogether in black, with her grey hair drawn back from the point of the black velvet curch with which her head was covered, and an eager, somewhat restless, eye, presented no points either of great interest or attraction, and appeared what, in fact, she really was, a poor and distant relation of the young lady whom she accompanied, willing to derive competence, importance, and dignity from acting the part of companion to one above herself in worldly advantages.

It frequently and naturally happens, that persons in such a situation lose all native dignity of character, and become at once subservient to those above them, and domineering to those below. This, indeed, is not always the case; and when it is not, the great trial of the human heart, which such circumstances inflict, but leaves the character of thos who endure it well, more bright and noble than

they otherwise would have appeared. But, in the present instance, the result was the more common one, and the old Marquise de Saulny, though possessing several good qualities, presented, in general, a character but little estimable. Talkative till she was repressed; loving to rule and direct the household of the young lady to whom she was attached; excitable, and somewhat tyrannical by nature, but subservient by habit and by policy, she was often inclined to affect a degree of power and authority over her fair companion, which the sweet girl herself but rarely thought it worth while to oppose, but which, as soon as she did oppose it, sunk into the most perfect submission and humility. Often, too, she would make an effort to engross the whole conversation, and in ordinary instances did so without any fear of rivalry from her less loquacious companion; but whenever the young lady herself showed an inclination to speak, Madame de Saulny was silent, or only conversed with the inferior persons round about her in a low tone.

As we have said, it was by the side of the

younger lady that Charles of Montsoreau was now standing, giving her apparently an account of the events that had just passed, while she, with her soft eyes turned eagerly towards his face, listened to every word he uttered with deep interest, and asked him manifold questions as he went on.

It would seem that Charles of Montsoreau had not been aware of the return of his brother, for he started slightly at his appearance, and the young lady turned her eyes towards the door with an inquiring look, as the Marquis and the Abbé de Boisguerin entered.

"This is my brother, madam," said Charles of Montsoreau, taking a step forward. "Gaspar, I have been acting as your lieutenant here during your absence. The man I sent to you doubtless told you what had then occurred; and although I knew not, when I offered these ladies in your name the protection of your château, whom it was I had an opportunity of thus slightly serving, I was quite sure that I only did what you would have done if you had been present."

"Undoubtedly, my gallant brother," replied the Marquis—"you did all that was right, and all that was chivalrous. For my own sake, I must regret my absence at the moment when these events took place; but for these ladies' sake I cannot regret it, for I know none who would welcome them more warmly, or defend them more gallantly, than you, Charles.—And so you have stood a siege and won a battle *during* my absence, while I have only had the luck to kill a huge boar.—I hope," he added, advancing towards the younger lady, "I hope that you have neither suffered great fear nor great *inconvenience*; and though it is possible that these reiters will linger about in this neighbourhood for some time to come, being now upon our guard, we shall soon have men enough under arms to protect you against any further violence."

While he had been speaking the young lady had regarded him attentively, but with a very different glance from that which she had been giving to his brother. It seemed as if the events which had taken place had rendered

her familiar with the one, even in the short space of time which their acquaintance had yet lasted, and she looked upon him as a friend, while she gazed upon the other as a stranger. She replied courteously, however, thanking him for the hospitality which had been shown to them, and assuring him, that though she had certainly been very much frightened while they were flying from the pursuit of the reiters, yet she had lost all fear as soon as they were within the walls of Montsoreau.

"You have forgot one thing, Charles," said the Abbé de Boisguerin, advancing, "which is to present your brother and myself formally to these ladies; for we, who were unfortunate enough to be absent on a less pleasing occupation than that of giving them assistance, do not yet know to whom you have been fortunate enough to afford protection."

Charles of Montsoreau coloured slightly, as he was reminded of his omission, and then presented his brother and the Abbé to the Marquise de Saulny and Mademoiselle de Clairvaut.

At the name of the latter, the brow of the

Abbé de Boisguerin, which had been somewhat contracted, expanded in a moment, and his lip lighted up with a bright smile.

"If I am not mistaken," he said, bowing low to the younger lady, "Mademoiselle de Clairvaut is niece of that most noble prince the Duke of Guise."

"My mother was his niece," replied the young lady; "but I may boast that his affection is not less for me than if I were myself his niece —I may say his daughter."

"Well may any one be proud of his regard," replied the Abbé, "and well, I feel sure, may the Duke of Guise also feel deep regard for Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. But I trust that this young gentleman has already taken care you should have some better entertainment than the report of cannon. You have, I hope, had some refreshment."

"No," replied the young lady, with a smile, as she saw the colour again come up into the cheek of Charles of Montsoreau at the implied reproach; "no, he has been sufficiently occupied, till within the last half hour, in defending us

from the enemy, who seemed at one time, I understand, resolved to storm the château; and since then, I have kept him giving me answers to many foolish questions; so that he has had no time to think of offering refreshment to any one — though I know, my good Madame de Saulny, that fear always makes you hungry."

"Not such fear as we have had to-day, dear Marie," replied Madame de Saulny. "It has been quite enough to-day to take away my appetite altogether, till I heard that we were quite safe, and those hateful reiters gone from before the gates. How I shall ever gain courage to set out again I do not know."

"I only trust, dear madam," said Gaspar de Montsoreau, "I only trust that your terror may last a long while, so that we may keep our two fair prisoners within our château till such time as all the roads are in perfect safety."

The colour came a little more deeply into the cheek of Marie de Clairvaut.

"I think, indeed," she said, "that we ought to set off again as soon as possible. We owe you many, many thanks, gentlemen, for the pro-

tection you have already afforded, and the hospitality you are willing to show. But as I am hastening by my uncle's direction to my estates near Dreux, where I expect to meet him, I fear I must not linger by the way. Some of our poor attendants, I understand, are wounded; these we must leave to your kind care. But I hope it will be found possible for us to proceed on our way before nightfall."

"You will pardon me, madam," said the Abbé de Boisguerin, "and my young friends here will pardon me for taking the matter in some degree out of their hands; but believe me, what you propose is perfectly impossible. It would be madness to attempt it. I should hold myself, as an ecclesiastic, deeply criminal, were I not at once to remonstrate against such a proceeding. The whole country, between this and Dreux, a space of more than two hundred miles, is filled with the bands of the King of Navarre, especially the Germans, and other heretics in his service. I take it for granted, that you have got a passport and safe-conduct from some of his chief officers; but the conduct of the reiters

towards you this day must have shown you how little such safe-conducts are respected by those bands of ruffians."

"Indeed," said Madame de Saulny, "you give us credit, sir, for more prudence than we possess. We have neither passport nor safe-conduct from any of the heretic leaders; for this young lady was so anxious to obey the directions of her uncle at once, that she would stay for no remonstrance."

"Now that we have her here, however, she must submit to be more strictly ruled," said Charles of Montsoreau with a smile.

"Ay, but we have your promise that we should come and go in safety, and without opposition," said Marie de Clairvaut in the same tone, and likewise with a smile. "You surely will not shut the castle gates against my departure."

"No, we will not do that," said his brother; "but we will reverse the usual course, if you prove refractory, and turn you over from the secular arm to the power of the church, fair lady. Our excellent friend, the Abbé here, shall decide upon your fate, and I feel sure that his decision

will be ratified and confirmed by your princely uncle."

"My judgment is soon pronounced," said the Abbé. "In the first place, before you can or ought to stir a step from beyond these walls, you must absolutely procure a safe-conduct from Henry of Navarre, or some of his principal leaders. We will send off a messenger to obtain it; and in the mean while a courier shall be also sent to his Highness the Duke of Guise, to give him notice of where you are, and to have his good will and pleasure in regard to your farther proceedings."

The young lady turned an inquiring glance upon her companion. It was a look of much doubt and hesitation; but whatever might be her own wishes upon the occasion—whether inclination led her to stay, or feelings of propriety prompted her to go — her appealing eyes were certainly turned to a personage whose mind was already made up as to what was expedient to be done. Madame de Saulny loved not reiters at all; the sound of their galloping hoofs in pursuit of the carriage, the report of fire arms upon the bridge,

the roaring of the cannon from the castle, were all still ringing in her ears, and persuading her, in a very loud and imperative voice, that on such a cold day, and in such perilous circumstances, a warm comfortable mansion, good food, good lodging, and good attendance, with the society of two handsome young men, and an agreeable ecclesiastic, formed a whole infinitely preferable to a dull high road in frosty weather, coarse lodging, bad inns, dangerous driving, and fears at every turning.

"Now, my dear Mary," exclaimed Madame de Saulny, "you see that all my opinions are fully confirmed by authority, which I trust you will pay a little more attention to. This excellent gentleman has only said what I said before, and if you persist in going, the consequences be upon your head."

"My only fear," replied the young lady, "is that the duke should not approve of my staying. But when the opinion of every one is against me, of course I must yield."

"Do not be the least alarmed in regard to your uncle," replied the Abbé; "he shall be

fully informed that you were very desirous of falling into the hands of the reiters; but that we would not permit you to have your own way, and detained you here by force against your own will."

"Under those circumstances, of course, I have no choice," said the young lady, "but I will beg that no time may be lost in despatching the messengers, so that I may not have to reproach myself with unnecessary delay of any kind."

The Abbé and his two young friends assured her that no delay should be used; and it now being settled, according to the wishes of all parties but herself, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut and her companions were to remain at the castle of Montsoreau for some days, her two young hosts, placed in a new but not unpleasant situation, busied themselves eagerly to provide for her comfort, and to make her hours fly as happily as possible. The first thing to be done was to give her and her companions some refreshment. The best apartments of the castle were allotted for her use; and although she could not

help feeling that her situation was somewhat strange; though it occasionally made her heart beat with the apprension of not doing what was right, and caused the colour to come more deeply into her fair cheek when she thought of it; yet Marie de Clairvaut, somewhat like a bird escaped from a cage, felt, in the midst of timidity and apprehension, a joy in her little day of liberty, and prepared to make herself as happy as she could.

CHAP. IV.

The prudent plans and purposes of the most prudent and politic people in this world are almost all contingent — contingent, in the first place, upon circumstances, the great rulers of all earthly things, and, in the second place, not less than the first, upon the characters, thoughts, and feelings of the very persons who frame them. Many a one may be tempted to tell us, that it must be a prudent man to form prudent resolutions, and that such a prudent man will keep them; but now the reverse of this common-place reasoning is directly the case, and the most prudent determinations are but too often taken by the most imprudent people, and violated without the slightest ceremony or contrition. This is, indeed, almost universally the case; for really prudent people have no need to make resolutions at all, and those who make them have almost

always some intimation in their own mind that there is a likelihood of their being broken.

The case of Marie de Clairvaut was not exactly that of a person either wanting in prudence or in firmness. She often considered thoughtfully and long, regarding proprieties and improprieties before she determined on any course of action; and, in the present instance, as she sat by her solitary toilet-table in her own chamber, she revolved in her mind her situation — the guest of two young and wealthy nobles; and although she felt perfectly confident, both from their whole demeanour and from the redoubted power and influence of her uncle, that she would be treated with the most perfect courtesy, hospitality, and kindness, she saw that she would have in some degree a difficult task to perform, both in regard to them and to herself.

Though younger than either of them, Marie de Clairvaut had seen a great deal more of the world; and from her own circumstances, and those of her family, she had been called upon to consider subjects and to deal with events,

which rarely fall within the scope of a young, a very young woman's reflections. We have said in the end of the last chapter, that Marie de Clairvaut prepared to make herself as happy as she could; and it was the feeling that she had given way somewhat incautiously to such a design, during the first day that she had spent within the walls of the château of Montsoreau that made her — as she sat preparing to retire to rest — think seriously over her situation, and, as we have said, frame her resolutions according to the result of her reflections.

Some time was likely to elapse before she could hear from her uncle; and in the mean while two great perils menaced her in her present situation, as great and as probable, perhaps, as any that fancy painted in regard to her falling into the hands of the reiters, though certainly of a very different character. The first of these perils was, that either of her two gay and gallant hosts should fall in love with her. The days of chivalry were not then over — men did occasionally fall in love with a lady and not with her wealth; and there had been

observable more than once, on the countenances of the two brothers, various looks and expressions so strongly indicative of admiration, that Marie, without any particular vanity, might well suppose that warmer feelings still, might spring up in the track of those which had risen already so rapidly.

The next great danger was one of a still more terrible character — it was, that she herself might fall in love with one or other of the brothers. Now there were various things which rendered this probable, as well as various things which rendered it improbable. In the first place, though of a gentle and affectionate disposition, she had never yet seen any one whom she could really love; and though she had mingled with courts and moved in scenes where those startling changes were constantly taking place which try and ultimately use and wear away the finer feelings of the human heart, yet her bosom had been originally richly stored by God with warm, and kind, and generous sensations; and all that she had seen of the world and its worldliness had but

tended to make her not only hate and detest it, but cling to any thing that savoured of a fresher nature. She had lived enough in courts and crowds to make her abhor them, but not enough to forget her abhorrence; and she was now cast entirely into the society of two beings as little like those courts and crowds as it was possible to conceive: she was dependent upon them for amusement, support, protection; and withal there was that touching knowledge that she was admired and liked; which, to a generous and a feeling mind, is fully as powerful — though acting in a different way — as to a vain and a selfish one.

Had there been, in the simplicity and the want of knowledge of the world which characterised the two brothers, any thing in the least degree laughable or extravagant, there might have been no occasion for fear; but such was not the case: their manners and their tone were in the highest degree courteous, nay, courtly. They felt within themselves the station in which they were born, the high education which they

had received, the superiority of their mental and corporeal powers over most of those with whom they had ever been brought in contact; and that feeling added a dignified and somewhat commanding ease to the grace which nature had bestowed and education improved.

Marie de Clairvaut then considered all these things calmly and deliberately, wisely making use of her own dispassionate judgment, so long as she knew that judgment to be cool and unbiassed. The reader, skilful in the human heart, perhaps may be inclined to ask, whether there was or was not really some little indication, in her own heart, of a liking and admiration for one of the two brothers, which caused her to be thus circumspect and careful? All that we can answer is, that she herself did not think so; but merely feeling that, placed in an unusual situation, she was responsible to herself, and to them, and to her uncle, for her conduct, she took the very first opportunity of contemplating all the circumstances that surrounded her, in order to shape her conduct by the dictates of reason. She took a strong resolution, in-

deed, but that was the only indication of weakness that she discovered.

In the first place, then, she resolved, on her own part, not to be betrayed by any circumstances whatever into falling in love with either the elder or the younger brother; and, in the next place, she resolved to do all in her power, without acting insincerely in any degree, or discourteously, to prevent either of them from falling in love with her. Such a resolution implied that she was not to allow herself to be so happy as she had at first hoped and expected to be; but, nevertheless, she framed her purposes accordingly, and determined that only so much of her time should be given to the two brothers as kindness and lady-like courtesy required. She would not attempt to assume a false character, for such a thing was quite contrary to the frankness and sincerity of her nature. While she was with them she would appear what she really was, but she would avoid, as far as possible, all those occasions of intimacy and constant communication, which her residence in their mansion,

during troublous times, might naturally produce.

Now, all this was very wise and very prudent and we have endeavoured to show, that Marie de Clairvaut was not one of those people whose prudent resolutions are taken from a consciousness, secret or avowed, that prudence itself is wanting. Nevertheless, Marie de Clairvaut was a girl of less than nineteen years of age, and no more mistress, either of events, or of her own conduct and resolutions, under particular circumstances, than if she had been fifty. She began her plan, indeed, on the following morning, by pleading occupations of various kinds as an excuse for remaining the greater part of the day in her own apartments. But, alas! there were two enemies in her own camp.

One was Madame de Saulny, who thought herself bound to remain with her fair cousin, and yet had a very strong inclination for the more extended society which the château afforded. The other was a still more dangerous foe, namely, herself, who, to say sooth, found

the time pass uncommonly heavily, having with her on her journey neither books, nor any other of those sources of occupation which might have helped to while away the hours in the solitude of her own chamber. Having but a fretful companion in the good marquise, and none of any interest amongst her inferior followers, the first day wore away tediously, and, if we may say the truth, the hours that she gave up in solitude had the evil effect of making those that she spent with three intelligent and highminded men appear far more delightful than they might otherwise have done.

She found, also, that all three possessed accomplishments very rare amongst the high nobility of that day; that the whole world of art and nature, as far as it was then known, had been opened to their inquiries: and not only did music, and song, and poetry, aid to make the day pass pleasantly, but they also rendered the conversation that occupied another portion of the time refined, and bright, and comprehensive. They were not driven to talk of nothing but horses, or armour, or the battle-

field, or the chase, though such matters were not altogether excluded; but, as must ever be the case, every subject spoken of received a peculiar colour, a tone, a shade from the mind and habitual feelings of the speaker. If Charles of Montsoreau spoke of a horse, it was not in the terms of a horse-dealer, but it was either as the sculptor, the painter, the poet, or the soldier: he dwelt upon the beauty of its form, the docility of its nature, the fiery energies which render it the most poetical object in the whole inferior creation. If he talked of the chase, it was not alone of the slaughter of stout boars, or the tearing down the antlered quarry; but it was of the eager excitement of the scene; the rapid motion through fair woods and bright prospects; the music of echo and the hounds; the expectation, the strife, the slight portion of danger; of all, in short, which makes the real difference between the hunter and the butcher.

Marie de Clairvaut was not so much of a recluse the second day as the first; and with music, and song, and conversation, such as we have described, it passed as pleasantly as might

be; but there were several other little incidents which from time to time took place to vary any monotony that might have been felt. A report of reiters having been seen at a small distance reached the castle in the morning, and some horsemen were sent out to ascertain the fact. Preparations of different kinds were made for offering indomitable resistance in case of any fresh attack by a larger force. The armoury was explored; and while every sort of weapon needful for arming the peasantry was brought forth, pikes, and arquebuses, and morions, Charles of Montsoreau pointed out to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut many a curious old relic of other days, to each of which some legend was attached — the casque and hauberk of the crusader, the arms of some noble ancestor slain on the bloody field of Poitiers, or still older and less certain, the gigantic gauntlets of a follower of Hugh Capet, and the mighty sword and horn of one of the paladins of the Great Charles.

Then came in the youthful peasantry to be enrolled—some called upon as of right by their

young lords, but many flocking with voluntary readiness to the château at the first sound of war; then a tour of the battlements was to be made, and Marie de Clairvaut, accompanied her two young hosts round the towers and the walls, gazing from breastwork and embrasure over as bright, but as curious, a scene, as it was possible to conceive. The light mist which we have mentioned as occupying the lower parts of the ground on the day before, had been dispelled during the night by the severity of the frost; but it had settled down upon all the branches and stems of the bare trees in glittering crystals of white, which now reflected with dazzling brilliancy the rays of the clear unclouded sun.

Perched, as was usually the custom at that time, upon one of the highest points of the country round, even the windows of the castle commanded a very extensive view: but from the tops of the higher towers on which Marie de Clairvaut now stood, miles beyond miles were extended beneath her eye on every side; and the whole shone bright and clear in

the sun's light, displaying a varied landscape of forest and field, and hill and plain, all covered with the same glistening frostwork, and only varied in hue by the deep shadows cast by the low winter sun, and by the blue tints of the far distance, where the distinction between field and forest was lost, and some high hills bounded the prospect.

Though somewhat monotonous, there was much to admire; and Marie, and those who accompanied her, stopped often to gaze and to comment on the scene. It must be acknowledged, that Charles of Montsoreau kept not far from her side as she walked on, and that, though his brother was near her on the other hand, it was towards the younger that she generally turned, either to hear what he said, or to make some observations on the objects beneath her eyes. Throughout the course of that day, indeed, she gave him much of her attention, perhaps a greater share than his brother thought quite equitable; and certainly had Marie been asked, when she retired to rest that night, which of the two brothers was the most grace-

ful, which sang, or spoke, or acted most pleasingly, she would undoubtedly have fixed upon Charles.

Perhaps she might ask herself some questions on the subject; but her heart was sufficiently free and at ease, to make her believe that there could be no earthly harm in preferring the society of one in a slight degree to that of the other, and of rendering justice, as she considered it, to both. If there was, indeed, in her own mind the slightest idea that any particular feeling of preference was growing up in her bosom for Charles of Montsoreau, the only effect that it had was, to make her think it was very natural such a thing should be the case, as he had been the first to give her assistance and protection, and to peril his life in her behalf. Though the elder was very courteous, she thought, and very kind, and graceful, and agreeable, it could not be expected that she should like him as well as the person who had been actively interested in her defence; and thus she slept at ease, imagining that both brothers were but mere common acquaintances,

who might never be thought of three times after she left them; though, in comparing the one with the other, she was inclined to like the younger better than the elder brother.

While the two young noblemen had been carried, by the most natural feelings in the world, to bestow the chief share of their attention upon the beautiful and interesting girl who had so suddenly and strangely become an inmate of their dwelling, the Abbé de Boisguerin had held more than one long and apparently interesting conversation with the Marquise de Saulny. In those conversations—whether they took place in the halls, or the armoury, or on the battlements while the Marquise, with two of Marie's women, followed the young lady over the château — the Abbé, as we have said, seemed to take considerable interest: but still, from time to time, his eyes fixed upon the graceful and beautiful form of Marie de Clairvaut, or gazed earnestly upon the fair face as, beaming with the radiance of the heart, it turned from one brother to the other at every interesting point of the

conversation. In the expression of his eyes, fine, intelligent, and speaking as they were, there was something, perhaps, not altogether pleasing — a look of admiration, indeed, but a look mingled with or taking its meaning from, feelings, perhaps, not the most pure and holy. It was more like the gratified admiration of a critic, than the ordinary impression produced by beauty upon a fine mind.

However that might be, Madame de Saulny soon became aware, though she was a woman and a French woman, that the Abbé de Boisguerin, in the attentions which he paid her, was not actuated by any admiration of her own personal charms; and as she was fond of such attentions, and not very scrupulous as to any innocent means of attracting or holding them, she made Marie de Clairvaut, her personal beauty, and the high qualities of her mind and heart, one of the chief topics of her conversation with a person whom she saw was already, in a great degree, occupied with such subjects.

It may be asked, what were the real feelings

of the Abbé de Boisguerin himself? It will be fully time to dwell upon those feelings hereafter; for at the time we speak of, if there were any feelings in his bosom at all different from those which ordinarily occupied it, they were yet but as seeds in which the first green bursting forth of the germ was scarcely apparent, even to the closest inspection. It is true that he sat up for more than two hours after the young lady herself and her two noble hosts had all retired to rest. It is true that, with his arms crossed upon his chest, he walked up and down the hall, in which he was now left solitary, musing beneath the light of the untrimmed lamps, and revolving many a strange fancy and shadowy imagination in his own powerful mind. He felt that they were but fancies; but he told himself that it is often from the storehouses of imagination that strong minds draw the rich ore from which they manufacture splendid realities. Ambition finds there her materials; love his gayest robes; passion gains thence many a device for his own ends; and even science and philosophy have

often to thank imagination for many a grand discovery, for many a bright thought and happy suggestion.

As he paced up and down that hall in silence and solitude, communing with his own heart and his own mind, the consciousness of vast powers, great courage, and mighty scope of intellect, became more distinct, and clear, and potent in his own bosom. He asked himself, what, with such a mind, he might not be, if, looking on the troublous times in which he lived as a mere scene for his ambition, he were to plunge at once into the contentions of the day, and, with the sole object of his own aggrandisement in view, employ upon all things round him the mastery of superior intellect. He asked himself this; and with that thought, there might come up before his mind the thought of love likewise, the thought of passions, which have so frequently gone hand in hand with ambition, and of gratifications to be obtained by the obtainment of power.

As he thought, he paused, casting down his eyes, and they accidentally fell upon the sort

of half clerical garments that he wore. He gazed for a moment at his own dress, and then he murmured to himself, with a meaning smile, "Thank Heaven! I have taken no vows but such as can be thrown off as easily as this garment."

CHAP. V.

THE luxury of the present age has perhaps made no greater progress than in the cultivation of flowers, and in nothing, perhaps, has it produced its usual effect, of depriving men of the sweet zest of simplicity, more than in our enjoyment of those sweetest of the earth's children. Heaven forbid that we should lose any of the many bright and beautiful blossoms which have been added so abundantly to our stock within the last few years: having possessed them, we cannot lose them without pain; and, perhaps, in the very variety we receive a compensation for the something that is lost. But yet there can be no doubt that in the present day we do not feel the same keen pleasure and enjoyment in our gardens thronging with ten thousand flowers which men did in those old

days, when few but the native plants of the soil had yet received cultivation.

At the time that we are now speaking of, the attention of men in general was first strongly turned in France to the cultivation of their gardens; and Du Bellay, Bishop of Mans, was about that very period importing from foreign countries multitudes of those plants which are in general supposed to be indigenous to the country. One of the first efforts in the art of gardening had been to multiply those shrubs, which, though not, as generally supposed, indeciduous, retain their leaves and their colouring through the colder parts of the year, and cover the frozen limbs of winter with the green garmenture of the spring. Amongst the next efforts that took place, were those directed to the production of flowers and fruits at seasons of the year when they are denied to us by the common course of nature; and any little miracles of this sort, which from day to day were achieved, gave a greater degree of pleasure than we can probably conceive at this time, when such things are of daily occurrence.

In passing round the battlements of the castle, as we have described in the last chapter, Marie de Clairvaut had remarked a considerable garden within the walls of the château itself. She had seen the rows of the neatly clipped yew, and the green holly, and she had thought that she could discover here and there a flower, even in the midst of that ungenial season of the year. How it happened, or why, matters not, but upon the third morning of her stay, she woke at a far earlier hour than usual, and rising, after a vain effort to sleep again, she dressed herself without assistance; and believing that she should have no other companion but the morning sun, she proceeded to seek her way to the garden, with a feeling of pleasant expectation, which may seem strange to us in the present day, but was then quite natural to one of her disposition and habits. The garden was easily found, many of the servants of the château were up and about; and one of them with haste and care proceeded to open the gates, and unlock the doors, for the fair lady, and usher her on her way.

It were needless to enter into any description

of the garden; for few, scanty, and poor were the flowers that it contained, even in its brightest moments, compared with those now produced in the garden of a cottage in England. At that season, too, every thing was frozen up, and the more severe frost of the preceding nights had killed even those hardy blossoms that seemed to dare the touch of their great enemy, the winter.

It was enough, however, for Marie de Clairvaut, that the plentiful rows of evergreens refreshed her eye; and she walked along the straight alleys with a feeling of joyous refreshment, while the hoar-frost upon the grass crackled under her feet, or, catching the morning light upon the yews and hollies, melted into golden drops in the cheerful sunshine.

She hoped for half an hour of that sort of solitude, when, though there is no one near us, the heart is not solitary; when we hold companionship with nature, and in a humble, though rejoicing spirit, converse with God in his great works.

At such moments, dear, indeed, must be the person, sweet to our heart must be our ordinary commune with them, harmonious must be their sensations with every feeling of our bosom, if we find not their coming upon us an interruption; if we can turn from the bright face of nature to the dear aspect of human love, and feel the scene, and the companionship, and ourselves, all attuned together.

Such we cannot say was the case with Marie de Clairvaut, when, on hearing a step behind her, she turned and saw the young Marquis de Montsoreau. She felt dissappointed of her solitude; but, nevertheless, she was far too courteous in her nature to suffer such sensations to appear for a moment, and she returned his greeting with a kindly smile, and listened to his words with that degree of pleasure which the intention of being pleased is sure to carry with it. Gaspar de Montsoreau talked to her of many things, and spoke on every subject so gracefully, so clearly, and so pleasingly, that when memory brought back the conversation which she was

body of men, had rendered it scarcely necessary to pay any particular attention to them, and that it was only in consequence of his pressing request that Charles of Montsoreau had set out upon a distant expedition, which must keep him absent during the greater part of the day from the side of Marie de Clairvaut.

On their farther conversation we must not dwell, for we wish to hurry forward as rapidly as possible towards more stirring events. Suffice it to say, that it passed pleasantly enough to the fair girl herself, and far more pleasantly, though also more dangerously, to Gaspar de Montsoreau. He sat by her side, too, during the morning meal, while the Abbé de Boisguerin occupied the chair on the other side, between herself and Madame de Saulny. The Abbé spoke little during breakfast, and left the conversation principally to the young marquis; but when he did speak there was a depth, and a power, and a profoundness in his words and thoughts, that struck Mademoiselle de Clairvaut much, commanded her attention, and excited some feelings of admiration. But it often hap-

pens, and happened in this case, that admiration is excited without much pleasure, and also without much respect.

The mind of a pure and high-souled woman is the most terrible touchstone which the conversation of any man can meet with. If there be baser matter in it, however strong and specious may be the gilding, that test is sure to discover it. We mistake greatly, I am sure, when we think that the simplicity of innocence deprives us of the power of detecting evil. We may know its existence, though we do not know its particular nature, and our own purity, like Ithuriel's spear, detect the demon under whatever shape he lurks.

Thus, while Marie de Clairvaut turned from time to time, struck and surprised, towards the Abbé de Boisguerin, when he broke forth for a moment with some sudden burst of eloquence, there came every now and then upon her mind a doubt as to the sincerity of all he said—a doubt of its being wholly true. That the great part was as true as it was beautifully expressed, she did not

doubt; but it seemed to her as if there was frequently some small portion of what was doubtful, if not of what was absolutely wrong, in what he said. She tried to detect where it was, but in vain. It became a phantom as soon as ever she strove to grasp it; and though at times she seemed to shrink from him with doubts of his character, which she could not define nor account for, at other times she reproached herself for such feelings; and thinking of the two noble and high-spirited young men, whose education he had conducted with so much skill, wisdom, and integrity, she felt it difficult to believe that his own nature was any thing but upright, noble, and just. She knew not, or recollected not, that the children of darkness are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light, and saw not that it had been the policy and first interest of the Abbé de Boisguerin to acquit himself of the task he had undertaken in the most careful and upright manner.

The greater part of the day passed over much as the preceding one had done, with merely this difference, that the Marquis, aided by the Abbé,

persuaded his fair guest to wander forth for a short time beyond the immediate walls of the château; assuring her, that as his brother was out scouring the country, and the peasantry all round prepared to bring intelligence to the castle rapidly, no danger could approach without full time for escape and defence. The Marquis and the Abbé accompanied her on either side, and a considerable train of servants followed, so that Marie de Clairvaut felt herself in perfect security.

Nevertheless, the ramble did not seem so pleasing to her as it might have been. Neither, to say the truth, did it appear to afford the young nobleman himself the pleasure which he had anticipated. For the first time, perhaps, in his life, the society and the conversation of the Abbé de Boisguerin irritated and made him impatient. He himself became often silent and moody; and after a time the Abbé seemed to note his impatience, and divine the cause, for with one of his own peculiar slight smiles, he betook himself to the side of the Marquise de Saulny, and left Gaspar de Montsoreau to en-

tertain his fair guest without listeners or interruption.

The young lord's equanimity, however, had been overthrown; it was some time ere he could regain it; and just as he was so doing, and the conversation was becoming both more animated and more pleasing between him and Marie de Clairvaut, his brother Charles was seen coming rapidly over the hill, at the head of his gallant troop of horsemen, with grace, and ease, and power in every line of his figure, the light of high spirit and of chivalry breathing from every feature of his face, and every movement of his person.

His keen eye instantly caught the party from the château, and turning his horse that way, he sprang to the ground by Mademoiselle de Clairvaut's side, and gave her the good morrow with frank and manly courtesy. He said little of his expedition, except to laugh at the unnecessary trouble he had taken, the band of men whom he had gone out to reconnoitre proving to be a troop of Catholic soldiers, in the service of the King of France. He

showed no ill humour, however, towards his brother, for having pressed him to undertake a useless enterprise, when, undoubtedly, he would have preferred being by the side of Marie de Clairvaut. But the smiles with which she received him proved a sufficient recompense; and he now applied himself to make up for lost time, by enjoying her conversation as much as possible during the rest of the evening, without observing that his brother appeared to be out of humour, and not very well satisfied with the attentions that he paid her.

The first thing that at all roused him from this sort of unconsciousness, was a sudden exclamation of the Marquis towards the close of the evening, when he was performing some little act of ceremonious courtesy towards their fair guest.

"Why, Charles," he exclaimed, "one would think that you were the Lord of Montsoreau, you do the honours of the place so habitually."

Charles of Montsoreau had never heard such words from his brother's lips before. He started, turned pale, and gazed with a silent glance of

inquiry in his brother's face. But he made no reply, and fell into a fit of deep thought, which lasted till the party separated, and they retired to rest.

Marie de Clairvaut had remarked those words also, and she felt pained and grieved. She was not a person to believe, on the slightest indication of her society being agreeable to any man she met with, that he must be necessarily in the high road to become her lover. She knew, she felt, that it was perfectly possible to be much pleased with, to be fond of, to seek companionship with, a person of the other sex, without one other feeling, without one other wish, than those comprised within the simple name of friendship. She, therefore, did not know, and would not fancy, that there was any thing like love towards herself springing up so soon in the bosom of Gaspar de Montsoreau. But she did see, and saw evidently, that he sought to monopolise her conversation and her society, and was displeased when any one shared them with him. It made her uneasy to see this, for, to say the truth, the conversation, the manners, the countenance, of

his younger brother, were all more pleasing to her—not that she felt the slightest inclination to fall in love with Charles of Montsoreau, or ever dreamt of such a thing. But, as we have before said, if she had a preference, it was for him.

Nor was that preference a little increased by the manner in which he bore his brother's conduct. He became more silent and thoughtful: there was an air of melancholy, if not of sadness, came upon him from the very moment Gaspar spoke those words, which struck Marie de Clairvaut very much. He showed not, indeed, the slightest ill humour, the slightest change of affection towards his brother. He seemed mortified and grieved, but not in the least angry; and during the ensuing days bore with a kindly dignity many a little mark of irritation, on his brother's part, which evidently gave him pain.

"It is a sad thing to be a younger brother," thought Marie de Clairvaut—"perhaps left entirely dependent upon the elder."

But that very night it happened that Madame

de Saulny informed her that Charles of Montsoreau was, in his own right, Count of Logères, and considerably superior to his brother, both in power and wealth. It need hardly be said that her esteem for himself, and her admiration of his conduct, rose from a knowledge of the circumstances under which it was displayed; and she could not help, by her manner and demeanour towards him, marking how much she was pleased and interested. She gave him no cause to believe, indeed, that the interest which she did feel went beyond the point of simple friendship. But a very slight change in her demeanour was sufficient to mark her feelings distinctly; for her character and her habits of thought and feeling at that time were peculiar, and affected, or we may say regulated, her whole behaviour in society.

As yet, she knew not in the slightest degree what love is; and though, in her heart, there were all the materials for strong, deep, passionate attachment of the warmest and the most ardent kind, still those materials had never been touched by any fire, and they lay cold and

inactive, so that she believed herself utterly incapable of so loving any being upon earth, as man must be loved for happiness. From a very early age she had made up her mind, when permitted, to enter a convent; and though neither of her uncles would consent to her so doing, yet she adhered to her resolution, and only delayed its execution. She knew that at that time, and she believed it would ever be so, that all her hopes and affections were turned towards a higher Being; and these feelings in some degree against her will, gave a degree of shrinking coldness to her demeanour when in the society of men, which made the slightest warmth of manner remarkable. The exquisite lines of Andrew Marvell upon the drop of dew might well have been applied to her general demeanour in the world:—

"See how the orient dew,
Shed from the bosom of the morn
Into the blowing roses,
Yet careless of its mansion new
For the clear region where 'twas born,
It in itself encloses,
And in its little globe's extent
Frames as it can its native element.

How it the purple flower does slight!
Scarce touching where it lies,
But, gazing back upon the skies,
Shines with a mournful light,
Like their own tear,
Because so long divided from the sphere.
Restless it rolls and insecure,
Trembling lest it grow impure,
Till the warm sun pities its pain,
And to the skies exhales it back again."

Notwithstanding the words of his brother, and the impatience which Gaspar more than once displayed, Charles of Montsoreau changed his conduct not in the slightest degree towards Marie de Clairvaut. He was kind, attentive, courteous, evidently fond of her conversation and society; and more than once, when he was seated at some distance, while she was talking with others, she accidentally caught his eyes fixed upon her with a calm, intense, and melancholy gaze, which interested and even confused her.

The conduct of the elder brother, however, gave her some degree of pain. He was always perfectly courteous and kind, indeed, but there was a warmth and an eagerness in his manner

which alarmed her. She was afraid of fancying herself beloved when she was not; she was afraid of having to reproach herself with vanity and idle conceit, and yet a thousand times a day she wished she had not stayed at the château of Montsoreau; for she saw evidently that she had been the cause of pain, and she feared that she might be the cause of more. In one thing, however, she could not well be mistaken, which was, that the Marquis found frequent pretexts, and not the most ingenuous ones either, for inducing his brother to absent himself from the château. Charles yielded readily; but Marie de Clairvaut saw that it was not willingly; and once, when he consented to go to a town at some distance, which was proposed to him with scarcely any reasonable cause, she saw a slight smile come upon his lips, but so sad, so melancholy, that it made her heart ache.

In the mean while the weather had turned finer; the frost had disappeared; some of the bright days which occasionally cheer the end of February had come in; the country immediately

around was ascertained to be in a state of perfect tranquillity; and Marie readily consented to ride and walk daily through the environs, knowing that on these excursions, accompanied by her woman and Madame de Saulny, she was thrown less into the society of Gaspar of Montsoreau than while sitting alone at the château. On one occasion of this kind, when the morning was peculiarly bright, and the day happy and genial, it had been proposed to bring forth the falcons, who had not stirred their wings for many a day, as several herons had been heard of by the river since the thaw had come on.

An hour or two before the appointed time, however, intelligence was brought to the castle, which proved afterwards to be fabricated, that a neighbouring baron of small importance had gone over to the party of the King of Navarre.

Gaspar of Montsoreau seized the pretext, and endeavoured to persuade his brother to visit that part of the country, and ascertain the facts. But, for once, Charles of Montsoreau positively refused, and his air was so grave and stern, that his brother did not press it farther.

Gaspar was out of temper, however, and he showed it; and finding that Charles kept close to the bridle rein of Marie de Clairvaut, he affected to ride at a distance, with a discontented air, giving directions to the falconers, and venting his impatience in harsh and angry words when any little accident or mistake took place. No heron was found for nearly an hour; and he was in the act of declaring that it was useless to try any farther, and they had better go back, when a bird was started from the long reeds, and the jesses of the falcons were slipped.

Marie de Clairvaut had been conversing throughout the morning with Charles of Montsoreau — conversing on subjects and in a manner which drew the ties of friendship and intimacy nearer round the heart — and it so happened that the moment before the heron rose, she remarked, in a low tone, "Your brother seems angry this morning; something seems to have displeased him."

"Oh, dear lady," replied the young nobleman, "I pray you do not judge of Gaspar by what you have seen within these last few days.

I fear that he is either ill, or more deeply grieved about something than he suffers me to know. He is of a kindly, affectionate, and gentle disposition, lady, and from childhood up to manhood, I can most solemnly assure you, I never yet saw his temper ruffled as it seems now."

Marie de Clairvaut raised her eyes to his face with a look full of sweet approbation; and she said, "I wish you would just ride up to him, and try to calm him. Why should he not come near us, and behave as usual?"

Charles of Montsoreau turned instantly to obey, merely saying, "Keep a tight rein on your horse, dear lady, till I come back, for he is somewhat fiery."

He had just reached his brother's side when the heron took wing; and Gaspar de Montsoreau glad of an opportunity of marking his discontent towards his brother, spurred on his horse with an angry "Pshaw!" and galloped after the falcons as fast as possible.

In an instant every bridle was let loose, every face turned towards the sky, every horse

at full speed. We must except, indeed, Charles of Montsoreau, for his first thought was of Marie de Clairvaut. His mind had been greatly depressed during the morning: he had thought much of her; he had felt a vague impression that some accident would happen to her; and though he had endeavoured to laugh at himself for giving way to such a feeling, yet the feeling had remained so strongly as to make him refuse to go upon the expedition which his brother had proposed to him. He turned then his horse rapidly to the spot where he had left her; but she was no longer there.

"The lady has gone on at full speed, Count Charles," cried the voice of Gondrin, the huntsman: "That way, sir, that way, to the right. It seems as if she knew the country well, and was sure the heron would take back again to the river."

Charles of Montsoreau spurred on at full speed in the direction pointed out; but, from the woody nature of the ground, it was some time before he caught even a glance of the horse that bore the lady. That glance was intercepted im-

mediately by fresh trees and low bushes of osiers, and all that he could see was, that there was nobody with her, and that her horse was at full speed. The country was difficult, the road dangerous from numerous breaks and cuts. To set off at such a pace and alone, seemed to him unlike the calm, sweet character of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut; and he heard, or fancied he heard, sounding as from the path before him, a cry, lost in the whoops and halloos of those who were following the flight of the birds along the stream.

The sport was forgotten in a moment: he spurred vehemently on upon the road which Marie de Clairvaut had taken, while almost all the rest of the people in the field crossed the stream by a bridge to the left, and pursued the flight of the birds across a meadow round which the river circled before it took a sharp turn to the right. All the more eagerly did the young nobleman spur forward, knowing that about a quarter of a mile in advance the path which he followed separated into two, and that he might lose sight of the fair

girl altogether if he did not overtake her before she reached the point of separation.

When he arrived at it, however, she was not to be seen; but one glance at the ground showed him the deep footmarks of the jennet following the road to the right, which led far away from the point towards which the heron seemed to have directed its flight, and to a dangerous part of the river about a mile beyond. He now urged his horse on vehemently — furiously.

The road wound in and out round the lower projections of the hill, and through the thinner part of the forest that skirted its base; but though he, who was generally tender and kind to every thing that fell beneath his care, now dyed the rowels of his spurs in blood from his horse's sides, he came not up with the swift jennet which carried Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. He gradually caught the sound of its feet, indeed; and the sound became more and more distinct, showing that he gained upon it.

But this slight success in the headlong race which he was pursuing was not enough to calm the mind of the young cavalier. It was now

evident that the horse, frightened by the whoop and halloo of the falconers, had run away with its fair burden; and every step that they advanced brought the horses and their riders nearer to a part of the river which was only to be passed in the hottest and driest days of summer, and then with difficulty.

Oh, how the heart of Charles of Montsoreau beat when, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the brink of the river, the trees began to break away, and left the ground somewhat more open. But before he could see any thing distinctly but a figure passing like lightning across the distant bolls of the trees, he heard a loud scream, and a sudden plunge into the water, and then another loud shriek.

He galloped to the very brink, so that his horse's feet dashed the stones from the top of the high bank into the water, and then he gazed with a glance of agony upon the stream. The sleeve of a velvet robe and a hawking-glove rose to the surface of the water.

He cast down the rein — he sprang from his

horse — he plunged at once from the bank into the stream — he dived at the spot where he had seen the glove, and, in a moment, his arms were round the object of his search. At that instant he would have given rank, and station, and all his wide domains, to have felt her clasp him with that convulsive grasp which sometimes proves fatal to both under such circumstances.

But she remained still and calm; and bearing her rapidly to the surface, and then to the lower part of the bank, he laid her down upon the turf, and gazed for an instant on her fair face. Oh, how deep, and terrible, and indescribable was the pain that he felt at that moment. Sensations that he knew not to be in his heart — that he did not — that he would not before believe to exist therein — now rushed upon him, to fill up the cup of agony and sorrow to the brim; and, kneeling beside the form of the beautiful girl he had just borne from the dark tomb of the waters, he unclasped her garments, he chafed her hands, he raised her head, he did all that he could think of to recall her to animation; and then, pressing her wildly to his bosom,

while unwonted tears came rapidly into his eyes, he called her by every tender and endearing name, adding still, "She is dead! she is dead!"

As he did so, as she was pressed most closely and most fondly to his heart, as her hand was clasped in his, as her head leaned upon his shoulder, he thought he felt that hand press slightly on his own; he thought he felt the pulse of life beat in her temples. He lifted his head for a moment — her eyes were open and fixed upon him. The colour was coming back into her cheek. She spoke not, she made no effort to escape from the embrace in which he held her: but it was evident that she marked his actions, and heard his words; and if any thing had been wanting to tell her how dear she was to his heart, it would have been the joy, the almost frantic joy, with which he beheld the signs of returning consciousness. Eagerly, actively, however, he ceased not to give her whatever assistance he could, and then bent over her again to lift her in his arms, saying, "Forgive me, forgive me! But I will carry you to a cot-

tage not far off, where you can have better tending."

She raised her arm, however, and took his hand kindly in hers, making him a sign to bend down his head.

"A thousand thanks," she said in a low voice; "but I am not so ill as you suppose. I foolishly fainted with terror when the horse plunged over, and I remember nothing from that moment till just now. But I feel I shall soon be better."

It was not a moment in which Charles of Montsoreau could put much restraint upon himself, for joy succeeding terror had already displayed so much of the real feelings of his heart, that any attempt at concealment must have been vain. He gave not way, indeed, to the same ebullitions of feeling which he had before suffered to appear, while he thought her dead; but every word and every action told the same tale. He gazed eagerly, tenderly, joyfully in her eyes; he chafed the small hands in his own; he wrung out the water from the beautiful hair; he smoothed it back from the fair fore-

head; and he did it all with words of tenderness and affection, that could not be mistaken. Thus kneeling by her side, he again besought her to let him carry her to the nearest cottage; but she pointed to the small hunting horn which hung at his side, asking, "Will not that bring some one?"

He was not called upon to use it, however, for before he could raise it to his lips, the sound of a horse's feet was heard coming from the same path which they themselves had pursued; and in a moment after, the good forester Gondrin emerged from the wood, with no slight anxiety on his frank and honest countenance. His young lord supporting Marie de Clairvaut as she lay partly stretched upon the ground, partly resting on his arm, with the count's horse cropping the herbage close by, instantly caught his attention, and riding up with prompt and unquestioning alacrity, he gave every assistance in his power, seeming to comprehend the whole without any explanation. His own cloak and doublet were instantly stripped off, to wrap the chilled limbs of the fair girl who lay before him,

and scarcely five words were spoken between him and his master. They were: "Bourgeios' cottage is close by, my lord: shall we carry her there?"—"Is it nearer than Henriot's?"—"Oh, by a quarter of a mile."—"There, then, there."

But without suffering the forester to give him any assistance in carrying her, the young lord raised Marie de Clairvaut in his arms, and bore her on into the wood, looking down in her face from time to time, with a smile, as if to tell her how easy and how joyful was the task.

Gondrin followed, leading the horses; but as he came on, he asked, in a low voice, "Where is the jennet, Sir?"

"Drowned, I fancy," replied Charles of Montsoreau—"drowned, and no great loss, after such doings as to-day."

The cottage was soon gained, and there every assistance was procured for Marie de Clairvaut, which was necessary to restore fully the diminished powers of life. A sort of hand litter was speedily formed; some of the peasantry procured as bearers; and, stretched thereon,

dressed in the coarse, but warm and dry habiliments of a country girl; the beautiful child of the lordly house of Guise was borne back towards the château of Montsoreau with him who had rescued her from a watery grave, gazing down upon her, and thinking that she looked even more lovely in that humble attire than in the garb of her own station.

As they approached the château, horns, and whoops, and shouts made themselves heard; and it was evident that the absence of the young lord and the fair guest had at length been remarked by other than the careful eye of Gondrin. Horseman after horseman came up one by one, and at length Gaspar himself appeared with Madame de Saulny and one of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut's women, who had followed her mistress to the field; but, as was common with women of all classes in those days, had forgotten every thing but the falcons and their quarry, the moment that the birds took wing.*

* So extraordinary and remarkable was the passion for falconry amongst the women of that day, that Catherine de Medici herself, engaged as she was in all the wiles of policy

A multitude of questions and exclamations now took place; and without suffering the bearers of the litter to stop, Charles explained in few words what had occurred, dwelling upon the peril which their fair guest had been in, and merely adding, that he had been fortunate enough to arrive in time to rescue her from the water.

The brow of Gaspar de Montsoreau grew as dark as night, and forgetting that, in his ill humour, he had voluntarily quitted her side, he muttered to himself, "There seems a fate in it, that he should render her every service, and I none."

He sprang off from his horse, however, and walked forward on the other side of the litter,

during her whole life, found time to pursue this sport day after day, and had courage enough to follow it after having not only received several severe falls, but after having once broken her leg and once fractured her skull, by the imprudent habit of galloping at full speed after the birds, with the eyes fixed upon them, and inattentive to every thing else. The moment that the falcons were flown, every thing on earth was forgotten, and the most serious accidents were of daily occurrence.

addressing all sorts of courteous speeches to Marie de Clairvaut, who was now well enough to reply. Madame de Saulny, however, had no great difficulty in persuading her to retire at once to bed: not that she felt any corporeal disability to sit up through the rest of the day; but her mind had many matters for contemplation, and she insisted upon being left quite alone, with no farther attendance than that of one of her women stationed in the ante-room.

CHAP. VI.

THE windows were half closed, the room was silent, no sound reached the ear of Marie de Clairvaut, but the sweet wintry song of a robin perched upon the castle wall. Her first thoughts were of gratitude to Heaven for her escape from death, her next, of gratitude to him who had risked his life to save her. But after that came somewhat anxious and troublous thoughts.

She recollected the moment when she woke to consciousness, and found herself clasped in his arms, with his heart beating against her bosom, with his cheek touching hers; she recollected that he had unclasped the collar round her neck; that he had chafed and warmed her hands in his; that he had dried her hair; that he had braided it back from her forehead; that he had borne her in his arms close to his heart: she recollected that her own hand, from the impulse

of her heart, had pressed his; and that she herself had felt happy while resting on his bosom.

As she thought of all these things, so different from any of the ideas that usually filled her mind, the warm blood rose in her cheek, though no one could see her; and turning round, she buried her eyes in the pillow with feelings of ingenuous shame; and yet even then the image of Charles of Montsoreau rose before her. She saw him, as she had beheld him when first they met, galloping down to aid her attendants in her defence; she saw him pointing the cannon of the castle against her pursuers; she saw him bearing with calm dignity the ill humour of his brother; she saw him, with passionate tenderness and grief, bending over her, and weeping when he thought her dead. She saw all this, and a consciousness came over her that there was no other being on all the earth on whose bosom she could rest with such happiness as on his.

Nor did love want the advocates of nature and reason to support his cause. First came the thought of gratitude: she was grateful to

God as the great cause of her deliverance; but ought she not to be grateful to him also, she asked herself, who was indeed — as every other human being is — an agent in the hand of the Almighty, but who was carried forward to that agency by every kindly, noble, and generous feeling, the contempt of danger and of death, and all those sensations and impulses which show most clearly the divinity that stirs within us?

In being grateful to him, she felt that she was grateful to God; and it was easy for Marie de Clairvaut to believe that such gratitude should only be bounded by the vast extent of the service rendered.

She did not exactly, in clear and distinct terms, ask herself whether she could refuse to devote to him the life that he had saved; but her heart answered the same question indirectly, and she thought that she could have no right to refuse him any thing that he might choose to ask as the recompense of the great benefit which he had conferred.

What might he not ask? was her next ques-

tion; and then came back the memory of every look which she had seen, of every word which she had heard, at the moment when she was just recovering; and those memories at once told her what he might and would seek as his guerdon. Was it painful for her to think that he might even crave herself as the boon? — Oh no! A week before, indeed, she would have shrunk from the very idea with pain. The only alternative she could have seen would have been to be miserable herself, or to make him miserable.

Now such feelings were all changed and gone; and Marie de Clairvaut — having entertained those feelings sincerely, candidly, and without the slightest affectation — might feel surprised, and, perhaps, a little alarmed, at the change within herself; but she was by no means one to cling with any degree of pride or vanity to thoughts and purposes that were changed.

It is true that those thoughts and purposes had been changing gradually towards Charles of Montsoreau. But it was the events of that day which suddenly and strangely had com-

pleted the alteration. The near approach of death—the plunge, as it were, into the jaws of the grave, from which she had been rescued as by a miracle—had seemed to waken in her new sensations towards all the warm relationships of life, a clinging to her kindred beings of the world, a tenderer, a nearer affection for the thrilling ties of human life.

Then again, as regarded her young deliverer, and that near familiarity, from which the habit of her thoughts and the coldness of a heart unenlightened by love, had made her hitherto shrink with something more than maiden modesty: — in regard to these, her feelings had been suddenly and entirely changed by the circumstances in which she had been placed. It seemed as if to him, and for him, the first of all those icy barriers had been broken down, and was cast away for ever. She had been clasped in his arms — she had been pressed to his bosom — the warmth of his breath seemed still to play upon her cheek — her hand seemed still grasped in his; and when her mind returned to those ideas, after more than an hour

of solitary thought, the memories — which at first had called the blood into her cheek, and made her hide her eyes for shame — were sweet and consoling. She thought that it was well to be thus — that it was well, as she could not but consent out of mere gratitude, to be the wife of Charles of Montsoreau if he sought her hand, that he should be the only man she could have ever made up her mind to wed; and that she could wed him with happiness.

Such was the character of the thoughts that occupied her during the rest of the day. Her mind might, indeed, turn from time to time to her relations of the lordly house of Guise, and she might inquire what would be their opinion in regard to her marriage with the young Count of Logères. The first time that she thus questioned herself, she was somewhat startled to find that she entertained some apprehensions of opposition, for those apprehensions showed her, more than aught else had done before, how entirely changed her feelings were towards Charles of Montsoreau. They made her feel that it was no longer a mere cold consent she

had to give to her marriage with him; but that it was a hope and expectation which would be painful to lose.

The apprehensions themselves soon died away: she remembered the anxiety of both the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Mayenne that she should give her hand to some one, and she remembered, also, the half angry, half jesting remonstrances of both on her declaring her intention of entering a convent. She called to mind how they had urged her, some eight months before, to make a choice, representing to her that it was needful for their family to strengthen itself by every possible tie, and promising in no degree to thwart her inclinations if she chose one who would attach himself to them.

From the words of admiration and respect which she had more than once heard Charles of Montsoreau employ in speaking of her uncles, she doubted not that the only condition which they had made, would be easily fulfilled in his case; and thus she lay in calm thought, her fancy more busy than ever it had been before,

and new but happy feelings in her heart, agitating her, certainly, but gently and sweetly. Glad visions, growing up one by one as she grew more familiar with such contemplations, came up to gild the future days — visions of peace, and home, and happiness — while the blessed blindness of our mortal being shut out from her sight the pangs, the cares, the horrors, the sorrows into which she was about to plunge.

She was like some traveller bewildered in a mountain mist, fancying that he sees before him the clear road to bright and smiling lands, when his footsteps are on the edge of the precipice that is to swallow him up.

When she rose and left her chamber on the following morning, Marie de Clairvaut was greeted with glad smiles from every one. Perhaps her fair cheek was a little paler than ordinary, perhaps her bright eye was softer and less lustrous: but the change proceeded not from the consequences of either the fear or the danger she had undergone the day before. The slight paleness of the cheek, the slight languor

of the eye, and the night without sleep, which gave rise to both, had a sweeter cause in bright and happy thoughts which had shaken the soft burden of slumber from her eyelids.

All present gazed upon her with interest. Madame de Saulny was loud in her gratulations; Gaspar de Montsoreau himself showed a brow without a cloud, and his brother smiled brightly with scarcely a shadow of melancholy left upon his countenance. Her first act was to repeat the thanks which she had given to the latter on the preceding day — to repeat them warmly, tenderly, and enthusiastically; and Gaspar de Montsoreau, who loved not to hear such words, or see such looks upon her countenance, turned towards one of the windows, and spoke eagerly with the Abbé de Boisguerin, while wise Madame de Saulny drew a few steps back, and gave some orders to one of Marie's attendants.

"Do not thank me, sweet Marie," said Charles of Montsoreau, as soon as he saw that he could speak unnoticed by any other ears but her own: "I have not an opportunity of

answering you now, as I ought to answer you. After my return this evening I shall seek to be heard for a few moments, for I have matter for your private ear."

He saw the warm blood coming up into her cheek, and her eyes cast down, and he added, "I have to excuse part of my conduct yesterday — I have to see if you will forgive me."

"Forgive you!" she exclaimed, raising her bright eyes to his, and speaking eagerly, though low, "Oh, there is nothing in any part of your conduct to forgive — every thing to be grateful for; whether your devotion and courage in saving me from death — or your care and tenderness," she added in a still lower voice, "after you had saved me."

The eyes of Gaspar de Montsoreau were upon them both; he marked the downcast look, the rising colour in Marie de Clairvaut's cheek; he marked the sudden raising of her eyes, and the tender light with which they looked in the face of her young deliverer. He marked the beaming expression of joy and gratitude that came over his brother's countenance, and it was

scarcely possible for him to restrain the fiery feelings in his own bosom, and prevent himself from rushing like a madman between them. Two or three low deep-toned words from the Abbé, however, recalled him to himself, and advancing with a graceful, though a somewhat agitated air, he offered Mademoiselle de Clairvaut his hand to conduct her to the hall where the morning meal was prepared.

"We are somewhat earlier than usual this morning," he said, "because my fair brother, with our noble and excellent friend the Abbé here, have a long ride before them, to visit a relation who we hear is sick."

"*And* do you not go yourself, my lord?" demanded Marie. "Pray let not my being in the château act as any restraint upon you."

"Oh no," replied the Marquis; "it is as well that one of us should remain here in these troublous times; and this relation, this Count de Morly, is an old man in his eightieth year, who may well expect that health should fail, ay, and life too."

"Ay," said Marie; "but I should think

that at that period, when life itself is fleeting away from us, and almost all the bright things of this existence are gone, any signs of human friendship, and tenderness, and affection, must be a thousand fold more dear and cheering, more valuable in every way, than when the energetic powers of life are at their full. Then we want few companionships, for we are sufficient to ourselves: but in the winter of our age, close by the icy tomb, the warmth of human affection is all that we have to cheer us; the voice of friendship, like the song of a spring bird in the chill months of the early year, must seem prophetic of a brighter season, when the cold days of earth are passed, and all glad sounds and happy sights shall be renewed in a fresh summer. Oh, the tongue of youth and health, speaking friendly sounds to the ear of sickness and age, must be the last, the brightest, the sweetest of all things which can smooth the soul's passage to eternity!"

There was an implied reproof in the words of Marie de Clairvaut, which was not pleasant to the ear of Gaspar de Montsoreau; but it did

not in any degree alter his purpose; and merely saying that, if possible, he would go on the following day, he led his fair guest on to the hall, and gladly saw the meal concluded, and his brother quit the table with the Abbé to proceed upon their way.

As soon as they were gone, a burden seemed off his mind; he became gay, and bright, and pleasing; and his conversation resumed its usual tone. The stores of his mind once put forth, and there were sufficient indications of kind and generous feelings to give his society that charm without which all other attractions are poor—the charm of the heart. Towards Marie de Clairvaut his manner assumed a warmth and a tenderness which alarmed and pained her; and with the new insight into her own heart, which she had obtained, she was enabled at once to decide upon her conduct towards him. She remained in conversation, indeed, for some time after breakfast, and though grave and serious, was by no means repulsive; but anxious to avoid any private communication whatsoever with the young Marquis, no sooner did she see

Madame de Saulny make some movement as if about to quit the room, than putting her arm through that of her relation, she said, "Come, ma bonne de Saulny, I want to have a long conversation with you, and after that I think I shall lie down and rest for an hour or two, for I am much fatigued."

Madame de Saulny accompanied her to her apartments, leaving the young Marquis of Montsoreau standing in moody silence in the midst of the hall; and when, some hours afterwards, he sent up to inquire if Mademoiselle de Clairvaut would not go forth to see some game taken in the nets, the reply given by one of her maids in the anteroom was, that finding herself somewhat indisposed, she had lain down to rest, and was asleep. At this answer he broke away with an expression of bitter anger, and mounting his horse, rode out with a furious pace.

He had been gone about an hour and a half, when Marie came down into the room which we have described as the lady's bower, accompanied by Madame de Saulny, and employed herself in somewhat listless mood with the vari-

ous occupations of a lady of that day. For a short space she plied the busy needle at the embroidery frame, and then took up the lute and played and sang; but the music was broken, and came but by fits and starts; and it was evident that impatient expectation marred the power of present enjoyment or occupation. At length the clattering of horses' feet was heard below, and fain would she have looked forth from the window to ascertain which of the two brothers it was that had returned. At length, however, there was a step upon the stairs, and her beating heart decided the matter in a moment. It was Charles of Montsoreau that entered: but he was deadly pale, and that apparently from no temporary cause; for though he spoke calmly and tranquilly to Marie de Clairvaut and Madame de Saulny, the colour did not return into his cheek.

Marie, on her part, was anxious and agitated; she spoke low, for she feared that her voice might tremble if she used a louder tone. Her eye fell beneath that of her lover, and the colour came and went in her cheek like light quivering

on the wings of a bird; and yet she was the first to propose that they should go forth together.

"Your brother is absent," she said, "and I understand sent up some time ago, while I was asleep, to ask if I would go out to see some game taken in the nets. Would it please you to go and join him?"

"Much," replied the young nobleman. "He is not far; I know where the nets were to be laid."

"Then we will walk thither," she said: "I fear I shall be afraid of horses for many a long day. Madame de Saulny, you will come with us, will you not?"

But Madame de Saulny declined; and Charles of Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut went forth, followed by two of her maids, and some other attendants, at a respectful distance. The hearts of both beat even painfully; and for some steps from the castle gates they proceeded in silence, till at length she inquired how he had found the friend he went to visit. The young nobleman replied that he feared he was dying; and, after a few words more on that subject, the conversation a ain dropped.

At length, as they descended the side of the hill, Charles of Montsoreau lifted his eyes to the face of his fair companion, saying in a low tone, "I told you this morning, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, that I should ask a few minutes' audience of you. Let me offer you my arm — nay, be not agitated, I have nothing to say which should move you. I have to apologise, as I told you, for some parts of my conduct yesterday, and to ask you to forgive me."

"Oh, I told you," she replied, "and I tell you again, that there is nothing to apologise for, nothing that I have to forgive; every thing that I have to be grateful for, every thing that will make me thankful to you through my whole life."

"Would that I could believe it were so!" replied Charles of Montsoreau. "But I remember that in the first agony of thinking you lost for ever, of thinking that bright spirit gone, that gentle heart cold, that beautiful form inanimate for ever, I gave way to transports of grief and sorrow, I spoke words, I used actions, that I neither would have dared to speak or use towards

you, if I had known that you were then living and conscious. And yet I am sure, quite sure, that you knew, and saw, and heard those words and actions; and I fear that they may have offended you."

"Oh no, no, indeed!" replied Marie de Clairvaut, with her eyes bent down, her hand trembling upon his arm, and the colour glowing bright in her cheek — "Oh no, no, indeed! I did see, I did hear; but ——"

In the course of that bright and beautiful thing called Love, very often between two beings in every respect worthy of each other there comes a moment when the very slightest touch of that pardonable hypocrisy in woman, which, from a combination of many bright and beautiful feelings, teaches her in some degree to veil or hide the passion of her heart — when the slightest touch of that hypocrisy, I say, at a moment when it should be all cast away together, and the bosom of love laid bare to the eye of love — when the slightest touch of that hypocrisy seals the misery of both for ever.

It was such a moment then with Charles of

Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut. She knew not all that was in his heart at that moment, she could not know it; but she knew *herself* beloved, and might well have acknowledged her love in return. Had she done so, had she acknowledged that her own feelings towards him had rendered the caresses which he bestowed upon what he thought her dead form easily pardonable, the passionate grief for her death deeply touching to her heart—had she done this, their course might have gone on in brightness. But she knew not all that was in his heart at that moment, she could not know it; and the *first impulse* was to give way to woman's habitual hypocrisy, to cast a veil over the true feelings of her heart, and to hide the timid love of her bosom till it was drawn forth by him.

"Oh no, no, indeed!" she said; "I did see, I did *hear*; but—I thought it was but natural grief for one under your charge and protection that you thought lost in so terrible a manner——"

She hesitated to go on; she feared that she spoke coldly; and she thought of adding some

feelings more truly appear. ——
collect herself to do so, however, Ch
Montsoreau answered, with a deep sigh,
thought it was but natural, Mademois
Clairvaut; you thought it was but n
and so, indeed ——"

But as he spoke, his brother turned th
of the little wood through which the
proceeding down the hill, and came
them, followed by several of the hu
There was a frown upon his brow, a fi
dark eye, which Charles of Montsoreau
understood full well. But he met his
calmly and steadfastly — with deep a
grief in his heart, it is true, but wi
which he had power over himself to co

The angry feelings of the heart of C
Montsoreau were not so easily represse
spoke in a tone and manner well calc

"are you back so soon? Where is the Abbé? Montsoreau seems to possess greater attractions for you than Morly."

"Of course," replied Charles of Montsoreau, calmly; "but even if it did not, I should have returned in haste. The Abbé I left behind at Morly, as he has no other occupation here."

"And you have pleasant occupation," rejoined his brother, with a tone in which assumed courtesy but covered ill the intended sneer — "and you have pleasant occupation as squire to this fairest of all fair ladies."

"It is, indeed, so sweet to attend upon her," replied Charles, "that I grieve I must lose the task so soon. In consideration of various circumstances, my dear Gaspar, I find that it will be absolutely necessary for me to proceed to Logères immediately. I have lingered too long here already. My people will think that I neglect them; and I have determined to set off by dawn to-morrow morning."

The first expression that came upon the countenance of Gaspar de Montsoreau was undoubtedly that of satisfaction; but, with the

pause of a single instant, better feelings sprang up, and he grasped his brother's hand with a look of real anxiety, exclaiming, "Good God, Charles, at this season of the year! In this disturbed state of the country! Remember, Logères is more than a hundred and fifty leagues distant!"

"If this fair lady undertook as long a journey," replied Charles of Montsoreau with a melancholy smile, "in still severer weather, merely for the sake of doing what she thought was right, should I hesitate, Gaspar? Fie; she will think us all a household of priests and friars, who go not forth but when the sun shines, and think an easterly wind excuse sufficient for not visiting the neighbouring village. I will not diminish your garrison, either, very much, my dear brother. You must give me Gondrin with me, as he comes originally from Logères; but, besides him, I shall only take my own ordinary attendants, and I will find means to fight my way through, depend upon it."

Gaspar de Montsoreau was easily reconciled to this arrangement. He still raised some objec-

tions, indeed; but, when he looked at Marie de Clairvaut, those objections became more and more faint in their tone, and he could scarcely refrain from a gaiety so different from the gloom of the morning, as to mark painfully how little he wished for his brother's stay. Marie de Clairvaut returned to the château in sadness and grief. She knew not, indeed, to the full extent, how much the departure of Charles of Montsoreau was attributable to her own words; but she felt that it was so, in some degree. She blamed herself more bitterly than she even deserved; and, hastening to her own room, she locked the door, and wept long and bitterly.

After some time, she was visited by Madame de Saulny, who pressed so eagerly for admittance, that she could not refuse her. Tears were still in her eyes, and traces of those she had shed fresh upon her cheeks; but Marie would give no explanation; and it was not till about an hour after, when the good marquise heard of Charles of Montsoreau's intended departure for Logères, that she divined the cause of her young relation's grief.

When she did so, Madame de Saulny felt that, in some degree, she herself might have been instrumental in producing it. But it was one good trait in the character of that lady, that, if she committed an error, she was sorry for it with her whole heart, and sought to remedy it. She loved Marie de Clairvaut deeply and truly; she grieved much to see her grieve; but she hoped that there was no such great cause for grief, and that the matter might be easily remedied.

CHAP. VII.

The conduct which, as we have seen, was pursued by Charles of Montsoreau, had not been framed alone upon the supposition that his love for Marie de Clairvaut was without return. That belief, indeed, ultimately decided his determination; but a thousand other considerations had previously led him up to a point, where it wanted but one word to change the balance in either direction.

He had set out that morning for Morly full of hope and joy. He was not, indeed, confident that he was beloved; but he was confident that Marie de Clairvaut herself saw his affection, and had done nothing to check it. From all that he knew of her himself —from all that he had heard of her — from the casual conversation of Madame de Saulny, he was very, very sure, that the conduct of

Marie de Clairvaut would have been quite different, if she had not felt a sufficient degree of regard for him, to know that love might follow if he sought it. This was quite enough to give him hope and happiness. He had, indeed, remarked his brother's ill humour upon many occasions, and he had attributed it justly to the disappointment of a desire to engross all their fair guest's conversation; but he had not the slightest idea of the eager and fiery passions that were rising up in the breast of Gaspar of Montsoreau.

When he mounted his horse, then, to visit the old Count de Morly — one who, though only distantly related to his family, had been his father's dearest friend and wisest counsellor — Charles of Montsoreau looked forward to his return in the evening, and to the audience he had craved of Marie de Clairvaut, with a heart full of joyful emotions, and with fear bearing a very small proportion to hope. There was much happiness in his whole air; but it was thoughtful happiness, and for two or three miles he rode on in silence.

His companion, the Abbé de Boisguerin, was silent too, and thoughtful, and from time to time, as they rode along, he gazed upon his former pupil with a look of contemplative earnestness, a slight frown upon his calm, cold brow, and the thin nostril raised with something between triumph and scorn in the expression. He said not a single word till he saw that Charles of Montsoreau himself began to feel his own silence strange, and looked round as if about to commence some conversation. Then, however, the Abbé spoke.

"If you are awake, Charles, he said, "I should wish some conference with you; if you are dreaming, dream on: Heaven forbid that I should disturb you, for your visions seem pleasant ones."

"They were, dear friend," replied Charles, with a smile; "but I can give them up for a time, in the hopes of their being realised."

"Visions are often realised," replied the Abbé.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau; "you surely are jesting, my sage friend. I

thought to hear you reprove such idle fancies, and tell me that visions, however specious, were seldom, if ever, realised."

"No, far from it," replied the Abbé: "the visions of a strong, sensible, and reasoning mind like yours, Charles, are, on the contrary, very often realised; for they are seldom formed but upon some sufficient basis. But still I must have my lesson; and I will tell you, my dear Charles, that the visions which we have formed upon the best grounds, and which are consequently often realised in all their parts, are not unfrequently those productive of the utmost misery to ourselves, even when we thought them the most hopeful, the most happy. It is, Charles, that a thousand other things mingle with the realisation of our dreams, which in our dreams we dreamt not of, turning as with a fairy's wand the pure gold to dross, rendering the sweetness bitter, and changing wholesome food to poison. Look at that distant hill—the Peak of Geran—how soft, and blue, and smooth, and beautiful it looks, and yet you and I know that the small sharp stones

with which it is covered will cut, till they bleed, the feet of the person who attempts to climb it. That soft blue mountain in the distance, Charles, is as the vision of an eager mind, and the rough impracticable stony side, as the realisation of the dream itself. I would always ask every one who indulges in a vision — Have you calculated beyond all question of doubt what may be the concomitant pangs, sorrows, and evils that even probably will accompany the realisation of that which you desire? — I would ask every one this question, Charles; and I now ask you."

"*I should* think, my dear friend," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "that it would be utterly impossible for any one to answer such a question in the affirmative. The very fallibility of our human nature would prevent our doing so *with* truth. Good and evil must, of course, be always mingled in this world; and all that we can do is to think calmly, and endeavour to judge rationally, of that which is the best for our ultimate happiness. We must prepare ourselves to take the consequences, be they

what they may. If you ask me the question you have mentioned, I should at once reply — No, I have not calculated all even of the probable evils which might attend the realisation of the visions with which I was occupied, because my mind is not capable of discovering one half of the chances attending any future event."

Charles spoke somewhat warmly; for there is always a degree of bitterness to the confident mind of youth in any words that tend to shadow the bright promises of hope, and to teach us by doctrine that which we can only learn by experience, the fallacy of expectations, the mingled nature of our best pleasures, the dust and ashes of human enjoyment. The Abbé gazed upon his face for a moment ere he replied; but then said, "I would put my question closer to you, Charles of Montsoreau, and I will put it seriously. Have you calculated all the self-evident evils that would attend the realisation of the visions which you were pondering?"

"Why, my dear Abbé," replied Charles

with a smile, "it would seem by your serious aspect, that to-day you had turned prophet as well as preacher, could divine my thoughts, and see their results."

"I can divine your thoughts, Charles, and do," replied the Abbé; "and as it is a subject on which, however unwillingly, I must speak, I will tell you at once what these thoughts were. The results are in the hand of God, and in the hand of God alone. But I can and will show you some of the probable results."

"Nay, then," replied Charles, seeing that the Abbé spoke quite seriously, "such being the case, my dear Abbé, I need not tell you, that if you speak to me with warning, as your words imply, I will listen to you with every sort of deference. Speak, I beg you, and speak freely. Though no longer your pupil in name, I will gladly be so in reality. So now let me hear entirely what you have to say."

"Well, then, Charles," replied the Abbé, "what I have to say is this, and simply this. Your visions were of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. You fancied that by the various services which

you have rendered her you have obtained a strong hold upon her regard, a claim even upon her hand; that she showed a fondness for your society, a degree of affection for your person, which promised you fair in every respect; and, in fact, believing — and with some degree of justice — that you yourself love her deeply, you saw every prospect of that love being gratified by obtaining hers, and ultimately, perhaps, her hand. Now, Charles, was this, or was this not, the matter in your thoughts? was this the vision upon which your mind was bent? were not these the prospects which you contemplated just now?"

"They were," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "I do not deny it."

"Well, then," replied the Abbé, "I will not now dwell for even a single moment upon difficulties, obstacles, obstructions, upon the pride of the race of Guise, upon the views of self-interest and ambition, upon the probability of their treating your love for their niece with contempt, and rejecting your proffered alliance with scorn. I will not pause for a moment on such things; but I will speak of the matter

with which we began; namely, of the probable, the self-evident evils which must attend the realisation of your hopes and wishes. Charles of Montsoreau, have you thought of your brother?"

The blood came somewhat warmly up into Charles's countenance. "I have thought of him," he replied, "most assuredly; but I have merely thought, my excellent friend, that though he might have some degree of admiration for Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, yet he has neither had the opportunities, nor the occasion, if I may use the term, of feeling towards her as I do. Fate has willed it that I should be the person to aid her upon all occasions; fate has established between us links of connection which do not exist between her and Gaspar."

"But fate has not willed it," replied the Abbé sternly, "that you should love her a bit better than he does. On the contrary, Charles, fate has willed that he should love her deeply, passionately, strongly, with the whole intensity of feeling of which he is capable. This has been the will of fate, Charles of Montsoreau, and let not the selfishness of passion blind you. In

your pursuit of Marie de Clairvaut, you are the rival of your brother."

Charles of Montsoreau cast down his eyes as they rode along, and for several minutes remained in deep silence. "You mean to say," he replied at length, "that my brother is my rival, for I first loved her, I first won her regard: he strives to snatch her from me, not I from him, and why should I hesitate at the consequences? He must learn to overcome his passion, a passion which is evidently not returned. I go on with hope; and in love, thank God, at least, there is no elder brother's right to bar us from success."

"If such be your thoughts and feelings, Charles," replied the Abbé, in a slow and solemn manner, "I see no hope but strife, contention, misery — perhaps bloodshed! between two brothers, who were born to love, to succour, to support each other. And now they will draw their swords upon each other for a woman's smile."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau. "Fear not that, Abbé! My sword

shall never be drawn against my brother, were he to urge me to the utmost. But you view this matter too gravely, you deceive yourself, I am sure. In the first place, though angry, and mortified, and somewhat jealous, perhaps, that I have had opportunities of serving Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, which he has not obtained — though somewhat charmed with her beauty, and captivated with her graces — I do not, I cannot, believe that Gaspar feels that love towards her which cannot easily be conquered. He feels not, Abbé, as I feel — he cannot feel as I feel towards her."

"Charles, you deceive yourself," replied the Abbé, "nay more, you deceive yourself wilfully. Last night in the great hall, after you had retired to rest, your brother walked up and down with me in a state almost of frenzy. He told me how deeply, how passionately, he loved her; he poured forth into the bosom which has been accustomed to receive all his thoughts, his grief, his agony, his madness itself — for I can call it nothing but madness. He spoke of you — of you, the brother of his love, the being who

has gone on nurtured with him from infancy till now without one harsh word or angry feeling between you — he spoke of you, I say, with hatred and abhorrence; he longed to imbrue his hands in your blood; he called you the destroyer of his peace, the obstacle of his happiness, the being who had driven him to wretchedness and despair."

Charles of Montsoreau dropped the bridle on his horse's neck, and covered his eyes with his hands. "This is very terrible!" he said— "this is very terrible!"

"It is terrible," replied the Abbé — "it is very terrible, Charles; but it is no less true. Your brother so mild, so kind-hearted as he was, is now changed by his rivalry with you, is now full of the feelings of a murderer, is now ready to become a second Cain, and slay his brother, because his offering has not found favour in the sight of the being he worships, as yours has done! Of all this you knew not, and therefore you could not judge; but when I said you were deceiving yourself wilfully, Charles, I said not so without cause. Think of what your brother

was, one bare fortnight ago — all gay, all cheerful, all good-humoured, bearing contradiction with a smile, laughing at the thought of care, putting you always in the first place before himself. See what he is now, Charles, even when restrained by the eyes of many upon him — moody, irritable, passionate, evidently abhorring the brother he so lately loved. Can this entire change have come over a man's nature, I ask you, this sad, this terrible, this blighting change, without some strong and overpowering passion? and will you tell me you do not see he loves, loves with all the intensity of an eager, a warm, a fiery heart, loves passionately, loves to madness?"

Again Charles of Montsoreau bent his eyes down upon the ground, again he remained silent for a considerable space of time; and in that space, terrible was the conflict which went on within him. At length he raised his eyes gravely, even sternly, to the face of the Abbé de Boisguerin, and demanded, "Abbé, what would you have me do?"

"It is not for me to dictate, Charles," said the Abbé, in a sad and solemn tone. "You are

your own master, you are lord of princely lands and great wealth, you are lord also of yourself. It is not for me to say what you shall do. But I can tell you, Charles of Montsoreau, what you would do if you were the same generous, noble, kind-hearted, self-denying youth that was once under my charge. You would labour zealously, constantly, firmly, to overcome a passion which can produce nothing but misery."

"What!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, "and see the woman I love become the bride of my brother! What! witness their union, when she loves me rather than him! Why is this to to be put upon me, Abbé?— why, when there is every right on my side, and none on his? Why am I to be the sacrifice rather than Gaspar? Why do you address these words of exhortation to me rather than to him?"

"In the first place," replied the Abbé, "what you fear — what you seem most to fear, what it would be almost too much to demand from you — never will, never can take place. Marie de Clairvaut will never be your brother's bride. She loves him not; she rather dislikes

him: that is evident. You cannot suppose, Charles, that she will ever be his. So I remove that from all consideration. You next ask me why I put the hard task on you rather than him; why I exhort you rather than him. I will tell you, Charles; because with you I believe exhortation will have effect; with him it will have none. I have told you before, this passion with him is a madness. He is more violent, he is less generous, in his nature than you are, Charles; and if you would know more, know that I have already exhorted him, and found my exhortations vain. If you persist in your passion, if you, too, do not make a great effort to conquer it, misery, agony, and bloodshed will be the consequence. The despair, the death of him who hung at the same bosom with yourself will lie heavy on your head. You, you will be more to blame than he is; for you are acting with determinate reason and forethought, when I tell you that his reason is gone. And, moreover ——"

"Then," exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, interrupting him, "then I ought to become

a madman, too, to put myself in the right! Abbé, your reasoning is not just; but I understand and feel your motives, though I cannot admit your arguments — hear me, hear me out. Were my own feelings and my own happiness alone concerned, I could — yes, I think I could — sacrifice them all to my brother, if by so doing I thought I could secure his peace. But, in the first place, you do not even hold out to me the supposition that any sacrifice on my part would secure his happiness; and, in the next place, I have to remember that there is another whose feelings and whose comfort are to be considered. Much may have passed between Mademoiselle de Clairvaut and myself to make me sure that she knows my love, and to make me hope that she returns it. And, if such be the case, I have no right to draw back a single step, nor will I for any consideration upon earth. If I love her without her loving me, I can struggle against my love, though I can never overcome it; but if she love me too, I will trifle with her happiness for no man upon earth — no, not my brother!"

The Abbé remained silent for a moment or two; and then replied, "Charles, your hopes are deceiving you. Mademoiselle de Clairvaut's feelings may be favourable to you, may be kindly; but, believe me," he added, and a very slight appearance of a sneering smile hung about his lip — "but, believe me, there is no chance of your injuring her happiness by ceasing to seek her love. I speak from good authority, Charles; as it is not two days ago, from Madame de Saulny's own account, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut declared her intention to be stronger than ever of going into a convent. It is very natural, my dear Charles, that you, knowing and feeling the passion in your own breast, should think it equally evident to her. Very likely you may have addressed to her words of passion and of love, displayed signs of tenderness and affection, which you think fully sufficient to convince her; and yet she may not have the slightest idea that your feelings are any thing but those of common courtesy and kindness. You must remember, that a pure and fine-minded woman shuns the

very idea of any man being in love with till his absolute assurance that such is the c leaves her no longer any room to doubt. P modest, and retiring, as Mademoiselle de C vaut is, such, depend upon it, are her feeli and be you perfectly sure that nothing have done for her has been construed by he any other light than that of common kind and courtesy."

"I will soon know that," replied Charle Montsoreau; "I will know that this very ni and if I find that I have been deceiving my I will make any sacrifice for my brother. will quit the place; I will stand in his wa longer; although you yourself," he added terly, "give me no hope that, by any of sacrifices you demand, I shall contribute in least to my brother's happiness."

"I think," replied the Abbé, "that will contribute greatly to the happiness both; or, at all events, remove those cause dissension which would have made you l miserable. Your own happiness, too, ma served in the end more than you imagine.

obstacles to your brother's happiness will come from her, not from you. He may grow wearied of a pursuit that he finds to be fruitless; he may conquer a passion which he sees can never be returned. Your generosity and forbearance may, in turn, have their natural effect upon his heart; and he may learn to see with pleasure your union with her who never could be his. Thus, in fact, by making a sacrifice, you may make none; and by seeming to abandon, may win but the more surely."

"No!" replied the young nobleman—"No, Abbé! I will do nothing by halves. I will act upon no motives but straightforward ones. I believe that Marie de Clairvaut knows, has seen, and returns my affection. If she love me, if her happiness is implicated, nothing on earth shall make me abandon her. I will love her, and seek her unto death. But if I find that I have deceived myself; if I learn that she has not seen and does not return my love, I will fly from her at once. To-morrow's sunset shall see me far away; and then I will do every thing that lies in my power to contribute to my

brother's happiness. He shall be forced to say that I have laboured for his gratification and my own disappointment, though he has embittered his heart towards his brother, and suffered passion to turn the milk of our mother into gall. Let us ride on, Abbé, let us ride on: my determinations are taken. It is better to know our fate at once. I shall stay but a short time with the good Count de Morly; and I will then leave you with him, and ride back with all speed."

"Nay, my dear Charles," replied the Abbé, "I will go back with you. I cannot suffer you to tread a long road companioned by such painful thoughts as I fear you will have."

"No, no," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "I would rather go alone. I must deal with this business singly, Abbé; and, besides, some of us should stay awhile with the good count. He is your cousin as well as ours, you know; and, as he has no other relations, may leave you all his wealth."

The Abbé turned quickly round, with an inquiring and half-angry look, as if there was

something in his own bosom told him that he might find a sneer upon the countenance of his young companion. Such, however, was not the case. All was clear and calm upon the face of Charles of Montsoreau, except a melancholy smile, as if the motives which he jestingly attributed to the Abbé were too absurd for any one to believe he spoke in earnest. They conversed no more on a subject so painful as that which they had already discussed, but rode on quickly and in silence. Such had been the conversation which preceded the interview between Charles of Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut.

CHAP. VIII.

It was in the grey of the dawn, that about ten horses were assembled in the court-yard of the château of Montsoreau, on the following morning. Six were saddled and bridled, as if for instant departure; and the men who stood by the sides of those six were armed up to the teeth. Steel-caps, then called salads, crowned the head of each; and long swords slung high up on the hip, with the point of the scabbard almost touching the ground, showed a preparation for desperate resistance in case of attack; while the small pistols in the girdle were accompanied by several others attached to the saddle, so as to give every man an opportunity of firing five or six shots without the necessity of pausing to reload.

The other four horses were burdened with various packages; and after the whole had been

assembled for a few minutes in the court-yard, Charles of Montsoreau himself, accompanied by his brother and the Abbé de Boisguerin, descended the steps from the great hall, while his own strong charger was led forth, together with a spare horse to be led in hand by one of the grooms.

The countenance of the young nobleman was pale as the day before, and deep emotions were certainly busy in his bosom. But his aspect was calm and collected; and he gazed round the château of his fathers, from which he was going forth, perhaps for the last time, with an air of grave and tranquil resolution, which contrasted strongly and strangely with the agitation evident on the countenance of his brother. He grasped the hand of the Abbé de Boisguerin in silence; then spoke a few words, and made a few inquiries of his attendants; and at length turning to his brother, extended his hand to him, fixing his full eyes upon his countenance, and saying, "Farewell, Gaspar!"

The Marquis pressed his hand eagerly, but he did not speak, for he was agitated in a very

terrible degree; and his brother put his foot into the stirrup, and slowly threw himself into the saddle, in a manner very different from that light and buoyant one with which he usually mounted his horse to go forth from the same walls.

As he was passing through the archway, however, something suddenly seemed to strike him; and he turned his horse round to say to his brother, "Remember my poor dog Lupo, and be kind to him, Gaspar," and his eye ran for a moment over the upper windows, at one of which the curtain was partly drawn back, though neither the hand that drew it, nor the eyes which gazed from behind it, were visible to the sight of those below.

Charles of Montsoreau turned his horse again, and rode through the archway. — "God bless you, sir!" said the warder who stood near; — "God prosper you, my noble young count," said the porter of the gates — and in another minute Charles was riding away from his home.

At the bridge across the stream, the party

which thus left the château of Montsoreau found another horseman waiting to join them on their way; no other than the blithe-looking forester, Gondrin, who, with all his earthly goods enclosed in a large pack behind him, and mounted on a powerful horse which had borne him many a mile in various forest sports, looked not a whit the less cheerful — not a whit the more depressed — at quitting the place which he had made his home for several years, than he did upon going out in the morning to track the footsteps of a boar or deer in the course of his usual occupations.

The truth is, that Gondrin was one of those men who are without attachments absolutely local. There was far more of the dog than of the cat in his nature. Where those he loved were, there was his home; and if those he loved had not been with him, he would have felt a stranger even in his birthplace. Our local attachments, indeed, are in themselves almost all made up of associations; the pleasures that we have tasted — the happy hours that we have known — the friends that we have

loved — the sports, the pastimes, the little incidents — ay, even some of the pains of life are woven by memory and association into ties to bind our affections to certain places. Our loves and our friendships almost always derive the vigour of their bonds from the present and the past together — the ties of local attachments are all found in the past.

On the present occasion, Gondrin had with him the great object of his love and admiration: his young lord, the Count of Logères. He had with him, too, in the train of his master, more than one old companion of his forest sports. Two of the under piqueurs were to follow him as soon as safe-conducts could be obtained for them, with six dogs, which were the special joy of his heart; so that — with the abatement of a certain degree of anxiety regarding the temporal welfare of the aforesaid hounds — Gondrin was as happy as he could be; and whether on his horse's back, or reposing in the inn-kitchen, or resting by the roadside, he considered himself just as much at home as in his cottage under the castle of Montsoreau.

He bowed low to his lord as the young nobleman came up, and would have spoken to him also with his usual frank cheerfulness, but Gondrin was as shrewd an observer of men's faces as he was of beasts' footmarks; and he saw on the countenance of Charles of Montsoreau such indubitable traces of care and thought, that he judged it better to fall back at once amongst his companions in the rear, whose gay voices and merry laughter soon showed the effect of his presence.

Of his young lord, Gondrin had judged rightly, when he thought that he was in no mood to be interrupted in pursuing the current of his own ideas. The heart of Charles of Montsoreau was too sad and sorrowful — too full of bitter memories — too full of dark anticipations — to bear any interruption with patience. He had parted from Marie de Clairvaut — he had parted from her probably for ever — he had been disappointed in his hopes of love returned — he had voluntarily sacrificed the chance of winning her — he had cast away the bright and golden opportunity — he had cast away the

delight of her society — he had left behind
the home of his infancy, a place filled
every sweet memory — he had parted, too, f
his brother, the object of all his early a
tions, and had parted from him with feel
changed, and with a heart wounded and bl
ing.

Yet on his way he was borne up by
consciousness of rectitude, and by the vi
of high resolves. He had determined r
lutely and firmly, not only to put down in
bosom any vain hopes of ever obtaining
hand of her he loved, but, as far as possibl
conquer that affection — not only to leav
brother full opportunity of striving for her h
himself, but to aid, as far as it was in his po
by every exertion and by every thought
remove all ordinary difficulties from his
ther's path. He had already laid out his pl
he had already made up his mind to his co
of action. He would go to Logères, he thou
he would call out the numerous retainers w
were then at his disposal; he would take a
in the strifes of the day; he would attach l

self to the Princes of the house of Guise; and he doubted not to be enabled to render such service to their cause, as to obviate all opposition, on their part, to the union of his brother with the daughter of one of the younger branches of their family.

He hoped that it might be so; and he trusted that it might be so. He could not, indeed, deceive himself into a belief that he could wish Marie de Clairvaut to return his brother's love. That he could not do: but if his brother won that love, he could at least contribute, he thought, to his gaining her hand also; for there was something in his bosom which told him — though they had never yet competed for any great stake — that he possessed energies and powers which would enable him to accomplish more, far more, than Gaspar could achieve in the eager strife of the world.

Such were his views, and such his determinations; but it need hardly be said, that in forming those views and determinations, there ran through the whole web of his thoughts the dark and mournful threads of disappointment, and

care, and regret. He was gloomy then, a melancholy; and though to all who approacl him, he spoke kindly — though he was e considerate and thoughtful for their comf he uttered not one word uncalled for, and e fell back into silent thought as soon as he l uttered any order or direction.

The scene through which he passed was c tainly not one well calculated to dissip gloomy thoughts. After the first four or f miles, it subsided into a flat watery count with manifold streams and marshes, and l rows of stunted osiers and low woods seen dim straight lines for many miles over the h zon, with nothing breaking the continuity brown but thin white mists rising up from dells and hollows, and looking cold, and sick and mysterious. The pale grey overhang sky vouchsafed but little light to the earth; a though the sun at one period struggled to br through, his radiant countenance looked w and faint. The road itself was heavy a tiresome for the horses, and relieved by n thing but an occasional plashy meadow; wh

ever and anon a wild duck flapped heavily up from the morass, or a snipe started away at the sound of the horses' feet with a shrill, low cry.

Seldom, if ever, does it happen that the aspect of the scene through which we pass has not some effect upon us. When deeply absorbed in our own thoughts; when filled with grief, or care, or anxiety; or even when occupied altogether with thoughts of joy and happiness to come, we know not, we do not perceive the scene around us stealing into our spirit, mingling with, and giving a colouring to, all our thoughts and feelings, softening or deepening, rendering brighter or more dark, the colouring of all our affections at the moment. But still it does so; still every object that our eyes rest upon, every sound that greets our ear, has its effect upon the mood of the moment; and the sadness of Charles of Montsoreau, the dark disappointment, the bitter regret, the withering of all his hopes, the casting behind him of his home and all sweet associations, were rendered darker, more painful, more terrible than they otherwise would

have been, by the sky, which seemed to fr
back the frown of fate, and by the misty p
pect, as dim, as vague, as cheerless as the fu
of life appeared to his mind's eye.

At length, between ten and eleven o'clo
little village presented itself; but the popula
was few and scanty, while a sickly shade,
from the bad air of the place, pervaded mo
less almost every countenance, and bespoke
marshy nature of the soil. In the middle of
little place, where in England would have l
a village green, was an old stone cross cov
with lichens, and exactly opposite to it, a
side, appeared a large stone building wi
bush over the door, and written above it, "
Inn for Travellers on horseback.—Dinne
fourteen sols a head."

The horses and the servants wanted both
and food, and Charles of Montsoreau turne
thither. He himself, however, ate nothing,
continued walking up and down before the c
musing bitterly of the future. It mattered
to the innkeeper, indeed, whether the yo
nobleman ate his viands or not; for thoug

had a certain pride therein, he charged as much for each man that entered the doors, whether they ate or not, as if they had consumed the best of his larder; and though he would fain have bestowed the solace of his company upon the young traveller, the manner of Charles of Montsoreau, joined with a few words, soon showed him that his company would be burdensome, and he wisely desisted.

Peace and quietness, however, were not to be the portion of Charles of Montsoreau; for scarcely had the aubergiste left him to his own reflections, when a number of gay sounds made themselves heard from the other side of the village, and looking that way, the young count saw a company of itinerant musicians, who, even in that time of war and bloodshed, did not cease to practise their merry avocation, wandering in gay dresses from city to city, sometimes exposed to plunder and injury, but often strong enough and well enough armed to defend themselves, or perhaps to pillage others.

To tell the truth, these traders in sweet sounds did not altogether bear the very best of

characters; and yet, in that time of discord and tumult, when the greater part of men's time was given up to painful thoughts of self-defence, or the fierce struggles of civil contention, the wandering musicians were generally received with a glad heart to every abode, and obtained payment of some kind, either in food or money, for the temporary enjoyment they afforded.

The party which now approached consisted of two men, a woman, and a boy. The two men were ferocious-looking persons enough, with dresses of gay colours, embroidered with tinsel, and each bearing in his girdle a dagger, the meretricious ornaments of which seemed adopted for the purpose of persuading people that it was there only for show, though in reality the sharp broad blade of highly tempered steel was very well calculated to effect any murderous purpose. The woman had once, perhaps, been pretty, and she now decked out charms, blighted perhaps by vice as much as faded by time, with every ornament within her reach. The boy, however, was the personage of the group certainly the most interesting. He preceded

his brethren along the street, playing on a small pipe, from which he produced most exquisite sounds; while a small spaniel dog ran on before him, and from time to time stood upon his hind legs, much to the amusement of the children and women that followed the musicians.

The truth is, the whole band had been lodging at the other end of the village, in one of those little public houses called, in those days, *Répues*; but hearing of the arrival of a body of gay cavaliers at the larger inn, they were coming up in haste to see how many sous their music could extract from the pockets of the troop. The two elder men and the woman were pushing in at once into the auberge, without taking any note of the young Count de Logères, whom they looked upon as a mere idler at an inn-door; but the boy stopped, and, uncovering his dark curly head, gazed for a moment in the count's face, with eyes full of fire and intelligence.

He had scarcely paused a moment, however, when one of the men returning, caught him violently by the arm, exclaiming, "What are you lingering for, idle fool?" and struck

him a blow upon the face with the open hand, which left the print of his fingers upon the boy's young cheek. The boy neither wept nor complained, but stood with his hands by his sides, a dark and bitter frown upon his brow, and a flashing fire in his eye, which showed that his passive calmness proceeded from no want of indignant sensibility to the injury. The blow might very likely have been repeated, had not the man's eye, at that moment, fallen upon Charles of Montsoreau, and perceived in his countenance a look of angry indignation, while his apparel and bearing at once showed that he was superior to the party whom the musicians had met with within.

"Come in, Ignati," cried the musician, with somewhat of a foreign accent; "either play on your pipe to the gentleman here, or come and help us to sing to the company within doors."

"I will not go in," said the boy, "unless you make me; but I will sing the gentleman a song here, if he likes it."

"Ay, do, do," said the man; "sing him that Gaillard song with the chorus."

"I am in no mood, my poor boy," said Charles of Montsoreau, "to take pleasure in your music. My heart is too sad for your gay sounds. There is something for you, however. Go in, and sing to the lighter hearts within."

And giving him a small piece of money, he was turning away; but the boy drew closer to him, and looking up in his face with a sweet and kindly smile, pressed him to hear his music.

"Oh let me sing to you," he said, "let me sing to you, noble gentleman. You don't know what music can do for a sad heart. It often makes mine less heavy; and I will choose you a song, where even the gay words are sad, so that they shall not be harsh to the most sorrowful ear."

"Well, my good boy," replied the count, "if you must sing, let it be so; but you must expect me to listen but lightly, for I have many things to think of."

The boy instantly laid down his pipe on a bench by the door, and lifting his two hands gracefully, which had before been clasped together, he looked up for a minute to the sky, and then began his song, as follows:—

SONG.

Gué, gué, well-a-day!
Dost thou remember brighter hours
Shining upon thy happy way,
Like morning sunshine upon dewy flowers?
Oh, join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day!

Gué, gué, well-a-day!
Has fortune's favour left thee
(Ebbing fast away),
Like stranded vessel by a summer sea?
Oh, join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day!

Gué, gué, well-a-day!
Have the eyes that once were smiling
Now learnt to stray,
Other hearts as fond as thine beguiling?
Then join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day!

Gué, gué, well-a-day!
Has love's blossom suffer'd blight
'Neath misfortune grey,
Like flow'rs in the frost of a wintry night?
Oh, join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day!

The boy's music had contrived to fix
tion of Charles of Montsoreau, and

an unexpected interest in the fate of the youth, who seemed capable, not only of the mere mechanical art of singing the words of others, or, like a taught bird, whistling music by rote, but of feeling every word and every tone that he uttered. As the young nobleman looked from his face to that of the man whom he accompanied, and who sat by his side on the bench at the door, gazing at him with an affected smile upon his coarse assassin-like features, he could not but think that it must be a hard fate for that poor, sensitive-looking boy to wander on under the domination of a harsh being like that, and he almost longed to deliver him from it. He gave the boy some additional money, however, which made the man's eyes gleam; and he was proceeding to ask some questions regarding the fate and history of the whole party, when Gondrin and the rest of the servants issued forth with the horses, and Charles of Montsoreau prepared to mount.

"These are the vagabonds, my lord," said Gondrin, "who were up at the castle gates on

the day you saved Mademoiselle de Clairvaut from drowning."

"I did not see them," replied Charles of Montsoreau with some surprise —"I did not remark any one there."

"No," answered the boy with a light smile, "no, you were thinking too much of some one else."

"You must have made speed to get here before me," said Charles of Montsoreau.

"Ay, we go by paths, sir, that you cannot go on horseback," joined in the man; and we will be at the next inn gate before you to-night, if you would like to hear the boy's music again."

"Perhaps I may," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "at all events, you sha'n't go without reward."

"We will be there, we will be there," replied the man; and the Count having ascertained that the reckoning was paid, rode on upon his way.

The little incident which had broken in upon the train of his melancholy thoughts did not very long occupy his mind. "This must be a

shrewd boy," he thought, "to adapt his song so well to the circumstances; for it is clearly from what he saw at the castle gates that he judged of the nature of my feelings, and sang accordingly."

Thus thinking, he rode on, and his mind readily reverted to the darker topics which had before occupied it. When he arrived at the sleeping place, which were in those days called *Gites*, he found a large and comfortable inn, such as was scarcely ever to be met with in any other country but France in those days. He looked naturally for the band of musicians at the door; but it seemed that they had either forgotten their promise, or had not yet arrived; and the young count had entered the hall and commenced his supper before there was a sign of their approach.

The first thing that gave him any intimation of their coming was the sound of voices speaking sharp and angrily in the Italian language; and he thought he heard amongst them the tones of the boy uttering a few, but indignant, words of remonstrance.

Rising from the table at which he sat, the young count approached the window, and found that he was right in supposing the party of musicians had arrived. The boy was standing in the midst, and the woman, as well as the two men, were bending over him, talking to him earnestly, with vehement grimaces on the countenance of each, while the clenched fist of the elder man shaken unceasingly, though not raised even so high as his own girdle, showed that some threats were being used to the boy, in order, apparently, to drive him to something, to do which he was unwilling. Although the window was on a level with their heads, the count could not distinguish what they said, for they were now speaking low, though still eagerly. They raised their voices, indeed, almost to a scream, when they uttered some wild Italian exclamation, but it was meaningless without the context. At length, however, to the surprise of Charles of Montsoreau, the boy seemed moved by a sudden fit of rage; and lifting the hand which held his pipe, he dashed the instrument of music upon the ground, shivering it to atoms, and ex-

claiming, "Never! never! I will neither sing nor play a note!"

At that instant the elder man struck him a blow on the side of the head, which knocked him at once down upon the road; and Charles of Montsoreau opening the window, leaped out, and interfered, while several of his attendants followed him from the supper room.

The faces of the Italians fell when they saw him; and there was a sort of confused and guilty look about them, which might well have made any one of a suspicious nature believe that they had been planning no very good schemes, when the obstinacy of the boy had obstructed them.

"You treat this youth ill," said Charles of Montsoreau, frowning upon the man who had struck him. "Are you his father?"

"No, the blessed Virgin be thanked!" exclaimed the Italian; "his name is Carlo Ignatius Morone, though we call him Ignati. No, obstinate little brute! he is no child of mine! I bought him of his mother to sing and dance for us. A bad bargain I made of it too, for

he does not gain his own bread with his whims. His mother was a courtezan of Genoa."

"She was not my mother!" cried the boy in an indignant tone. My mother was dead long before that. But whatever she was, Paulina Morone was always kind to me; and she would never have sold me to you, if I had not asked her, when she had no bread to eat herself, and had given me the last crust she had to give."

"This is a sad history," said Charles of Montsoreau; "and as you say the boy does not gain his own bread, you will, doubtless, be glad enough to sell him to me, my good friend."

The man hesitated. "I don't know that exactly," he said, "noble lord. The boy can sing well, if he likes it, as you know; and he can play well both upon the pipe and the lute when he likes it and is not obstinate; and he is as active as a Basque, and can dance better than any one I ever saw. Would you like to see him dance, my lord? I'll make him dance fast enough. That I can always do with a good stout stick, though sing he won't unless he likes it."

"I wonder not at it," replied the count

"But you shall not make him dance for me. What I wish to know is, will you sell him to me? You said you had made a bad bargain, and that he did not gain his own bread, much less repay you."

"Not here in the provinces, sir," replied the man. "But I am sure if I took him to Paris, I could make a good sum by showing him to the lords and ladies there. However, I will sell him, if I can make something by him, sooner than be burdened with him any more."

"What do you demand?" said Charles of Montsoreau. "If you are moderate, perhaps I may give it to you, for I like to hear the boy sing."

"I will have," said the man, "I will have at least a hundred and fifty crowns of gold, crowns of the sun, sir, remember, or I'll not part with the boy."

"That is three times as much as you gave to the Morone," cried the boy—"you know it is."

"Ay, little villain," answered the man; "but have I not brought you from Italy since, and fed you for more than a year?"

"And spent a fortune in cudgels too up him," said the woman.

Charles of Montsoreau gave her a glance contempt, and then turned his look towards t boy, whose eyes were full of tears. The su that was asked for him was, in fact, considerab each gold crown being in that day worth six sous, and the value of money itself, as compar with produce, being about five times that whi it is at present. But the young nobleman, u accustomed to traffic in human flesh, that mo odious and horrible of all the rites of Mammo looked upon the sum to be given as a mere tri when compared with the boy's deliverance fr the hands into which he had fallen.

"You shall have the money," he said.—"Go drin, bid Martin bring me the leathern b which he carries, and I will pay the su immediately."

The first sensation of the Italian was jo at having over-reached the young French nobl man, the second was equally natural to the pe ple, and the class to which he belonged, sorro at not having contrived to over-reach him to

greater extent. The money, however, being produced, and the sum paid, the boy demanded and received from the younger man, who carried a pack upon his shoulders, some little articles of property belonging, he said, to himself.

"The boy is now yours, my Lord," said the Italian, looking wistfully at the closing mouth of the bag; "but surely your Lordship will give me another crown for the bargain's sake."

"I will tell you what I will give you," replied Charles of Montsoreau:—"if you and your base companions do not take yourselves out of the place as fast as your legs can carry you, I will order my horsemen to flog you for a mile along the road with their stirrup leathers."

The man put his hand, with a meaning look, to the gilded hilt of his dagger; but, in an instant, one buffet from the hand of Charles of Montsoreau replied to the mute sign, by laying him prostrate on the ground. A loud laugh echoed from the inn door at this conclusion of the scene; and starting on his feet again, the Italian and his companions hurried away as fast as possible, the elder one only pausing for a

moment, at about a hundred yards' distance, to shake his clenched fist at the young nobleman, with a meaning look.

"Come, my boy," said the Count, "come and get thee some supper. Thou shalt be better treated at least with me than with them."

The boy caught his hand, and kissed it a thousand times, and the young nobleman led him towards the house, asking him as they went, "What was it they wished you to do when I came out to stop them from maltreating you?"

"To sing and play to you, and engage all your thoughts," replied the boy, "while they stole the jewel out of your hat, and put a piece of glass in its place."

breakfast, and looked so full of joy, that Charl of Montsoreau could not help congratulatir himself upon what he had done, though he w not sufficiently ignorant of the world to suppo that, for the sum of a hundred and fifty crown he had bought himself a treasure of hig qualities, such as the best education can hardl bestow upon the best disposition.

He had made the boy over entirely to tl care of Gondrin, and told the shrewd hunt man to watch his disposition well, and l him know all the peculiarities thereof. H was himself too much occupied with gloom thoughts, to investigate the matter fully; an as the boy stood by him, he confined h questions to some points of his former histor and to the various accomplishments which l possessed.

To a question as to whether he could rid the boy only replied with a smile; and it a peared afterwards that, while with the Italiar the whole of the first part of their journ through Italy and France had been perform on horseback, till some acts of dishonesty, cor

mitted in the town of Grenoble, forced them to fly on foot with all speed, and leave their beasts behind them.

The purchase of a fresh horse for the boy, and of some suits of clothes better fitted to a nobleman's page than the gay and mountebank costume in which he had come to his new master, occupied a considerable part of the morning; and by the time Charles of Montsoreau issued forth to proceed upon his journey, the mists of the early day had cleared away; the grey veil of clouds which had obscured the sky during the preceding day had been scattered into small feathery fragments by the sun and the wind; there was a feeling of spring in the breath of the air, and a look of hope and joyfulness upon all the world around.

As the boy Ignati stood by his master's stirrup for a moment before they set out, he lifted his fine dark eyes to the countenance of the young nobleman with a look of love and gratitude that was not to be mistaken. It is true that a man may smile, and smile, and be a villain; it is true that the language of looks may often be

as false as the words of the tongue; it is true that no human mode of expression may not be poisoned by hypocrisy, and that even actions themselves are often as false as looks and words. But there are moments when the free soul bursts forth through all the bonds of habit or of cunning, and sports, if it be but for a single instant, at liberty; and in those times, though the words may still be false, or at the best regulated with deliberate skill, yet there are momentary expressions that cross the countenance — lights that beam up in the eye — smiles that flutter round the lip — which betray the secret of the heart's feelings, notwithstanding the most careful guard.

Charles of Montsoreau looked down, and laid his hand upon the boy's head.

"You know, Ignati," he said, "that you are a freeman, and not a slave. I paid your price to the Italians to give you liberty, and not to purchase you myself; so you are free to come and to go, to stay with me, or to leave me, as you like."

"I will go with you through the world,"

replied the boy; and though he said no more, he said it in such a tone as to leave no doubt upon the mind of Charles of Montsoreau that he was sincere for the time at least.

The boy sprang into his saddle with alacrity and grace; and the first horseman of the court of France could not have sat his horse with more ease and vigour. His whole demeanour seemed changed from the former day, as if slavery and the degrading trade to which he had been previously bound had bowed down his spirit, and with it his corporeal frame. There was a lightness, a joyous fire in his look, which spoke the consciousness of freedom and of dawning hopes. Before, he had been but a handsome, sullen boy; while, now, he looked older than before, and all was quickness and activity.

The sky, we have said, was brighter, the day more cheerful, and the scenery itself gradually assuming a finer and a bolder character. Entering that hilly district which lies between Limoges and Tulle, the road was constantly ascending or descending. Wide woods and

moors, broken by rocks and streams, were seen on either side; while now a soft green meadow covered the slope, now a rich-coloured fallow field showed traces of man's industrious hand. Here and there, too, a cottage appeared, with its little garden and orchard round about it; here and there a forge, while the castellated houses of many of the small provincial nobility showed their glittering weathercocks above the grey woods. The aspect of the whole scene was very peaceful; and so, indeed, that part of the country was at the time; for no towns of sufficient consequence were near to render it, though extremely defensible, worth the while of any of the various parties which tore the state to defend it against the rest. Through these scenes the young count and his attendants rode on during the day, till they came to their gîte for the night, at the pleasant-named town of St. Germain les belles Filles.

When the young Count de Logères sat down to supper, with none but one habitual attendant near him — while the rest of his train dined at a table at the other end of the hall — his mind

drew up the short summary of what changes of feeling his heart had undergone, which we are almost always inclined to make unconsciously, when we come to the end of a day's journey.

It were vain to say that the scenes through which he had passed, or the aspect of the day, or the occupation of his thoughts by the boy that he had freed, had made his heart lighter; but they had, perhaps, taught that heart to bear its load more firmly. He still thought of Marie de Clairvaut with the intense passion of first, true, ardent love. He felt but the more convinced, at every step he took away from her, that that love would last throughout his being. He felt that, without her, life was now a blank, void of the grand pointing interest of existence —void of all sustaining power, but a knowledge of rectitude, and a purpose of endurance. It was hard, far more hard, for a young heart like his, that had seldom, if ever, tasted sorrow before, or known affliction, to undergo at once the extinction of that brightest of life's lights, the hope of mutual affection. We value not our minor sorrows sufficiently: there are great ones

to be endured by every man on earth; did not the lesser ones prepare us gently the burden, we should be crushed under first mighty misfortune that befall us. Charles of Montsoreau had known few few, that he felt, as it were, stunned and numbed by the weight of grief that now c upon him. He had been deprived of the b that he possessed the love of Marie de C vaut; he had abandoned the hope and ta winning that love; and, at the same time, deep, warm confidence which he had ever that moment possessed in his brother's str unalterable affection, had been swept away He could regard Gaspar de Montsoreau longer as he had regarded him; he could tl of him no longer as he had thought; he c not respect or esteem him as heretofore; all the fraternal love that remained in his bo towards his brother, rendered him but the n sorrowful, that his brother was less worthy t he thought.

He was sad and gloomy then, and that ness was seen in every look and action:

seemed scarcely to know what were the meats placed before him, and only mechanically to taste of that which was next to him. After he had eaten as much as was necessary to satisfy mere nature, he leaned his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought, which was only interrupted by the low sweet voice of the boy, who had come quietly up to his side, saying, "May I not sing to you, sir count? I have seen a song prove better sauce to a poor meal than a duke's kitchen could produce."

"It would not be so with me, Ignati," replied the Count. "You shall not sing to me to-night, my good boy; but go to bed, and rest your young limbs."

Though he refused him, yet the voluntary offer the boy had made came sweetly; for, on the first sweep of disappointment's heavy wing, a sort of misanthropy is cast upon us which we own not even to our own hearts. We doubt, without our will, that there is such a thing as affection, or gratitude, or kindly feeling, or generous sensibility left upon earth; and it is sweet, and happy, and consoling when any thing

happens, however light or small, to s
feelingly that our dark judgment of th
was wrong. He still refused the boy's
however, though kindly; for he was bu
his own thoughts, and wished to pursu
undisturbed.

On the following morning he contin
journey: nor is it worth while to foll
day by day, while, taking his way by
and Chalons, he approached the north
frontier of France. The journey was l
tedious, but it was accomplished with
accident or interruption; and, indeed,
approached near the frontiers of Lorra
traces of the war which desolated Fran
comparatively small. Commerce, indee
was little or none throughout the lan
agriculture was pursued with less dif
and in those districts where the strife
actually going on, the first return of
saw the husbandman again in the field.

The neighbourhood of Troyes and C
however, began to show evident ma
the ravages of war: the fields were

vated; the towns guarded with rigorous strictness; no tall ricks of corn were seen near the farm-house; the cattle lowed not in the plains; the shepherd turned anxiously round at every sound of a horse's steps; and, in many places, the vineyards themselves showed the marks of fire, and the vines were seen cut down and piled up for fuel. Wherever the traveller stopped and inquired what was the cause of the destruction he beheld, he was told that a body of reiters had pillaged here, or a horde of Germans wasted there; and, although there were some who ventured, in the angry indignation of their heart, to curse both the house of Guise and the house of La Mark, and to express their horror of all parties alike, yet it was evident that the chivalrous spirit of the Guises, their gracious demeanour, and their heroic actions against a foreign enemy, had in general won the love of the people, so that they were greatly preferred to the Protestant princes of Sedan, who had led an army of thirty thousand strangers to the invasion of their native country.

Charles of Montsoreau learned all these tales as he passed; and at each inn where he stopped he received some warning not to advance rashly in this direction, or in that, lest he should meet with some of the scattered bands who had turned their swords into reaping hooks in a very different sense from the pacific one, and were gathering in a harvest which they had not sown, from the fears and necessities of the country.

Thus it happened in setting out from Chalons, the good aubergiste, who had taken care to extract from the purse of the young nobleman as much as could be obtained with any appearance of honesty, counselled him strongly, instead of pursuing the high road towards Rheims, to follow the way along the river towards Mareuil, and thence across the country. "For," said he, "there is a band of at least fifty reiters have been watching the Rheims' gate for the last ten days, and have taken toll of every one that passed, be he citizen or gentleman. Your train, too, is so scanty, young sir, that one sees evidently you come from a quieter place.

Why, no one here ever thinks of riding without forty men at least; and the good Duke of Guise dare not go himself from one château to another without a hundred salads at his back."

As Charles of Montsoreau was not by any means well satisfied with the peculiar species of honesty of his host, he made no reply to his counsels, but followed his former purpose, and took the high road. Ere he had pursued it two miles, however, the merry huntsman Gondrin rode up, with the boy Ignati by his side, and some eagerness on his countenance.

"My Lord," he said, "the boy declares that he saw the gleaming of spear-heads upon the side of the hill a mile on."

"Indeed, Ignati!" said the Count — "your eyes must be sharp. Point out to me these spears; for I have seen nothing of them, though I have been watching anxiously."

"I can't show them to you now, sir," replied the boy, "for they have gone slowly behind the wood; but I saw them, believe me, and I am not mistaken."

Even while he was speaking a peasant was

seen coming along the road upon an ass which he was beating forward to as fast a pace as the brute's natural indocility would admit. The moment, however, that he saw the count's troop drawn up in the midst of the road, he suddenly paused in his course, with a look of some alarm, which did not seem at all to subside upon the young nobleman riding up to him with Gondrin and the boy, and insisting upon his stopping; for he was now endeavouring to drive his beast into one of the by-paths through the country.

He was soon re-assured, however; and no sooner did he find that the party he had met with was not calculated to be an object of terror, than he endeavoured to inspire the persons of whom it was composed with the same fears which had taken possession of himself, informing the young count that he had just himself passed the reiters, who, though they had left him the vegetables that he was carrying in his panniers to the market at Chalons, had taken from him all his poultry and eggs. He magnified their number and their ferocity very greatly; and as it was evident that they would not prove the

most agreeable of companions on the road he was about to travel, Charles of Montsoreau obtained more correct information of the peasant as to the way to Mareuil, and struck back again from the high road towards the course of the Marne.

The circuit that he had made, however, and the time that had been lost by one interruption or another, rendered it late before he reached the village of Condé, and it was dark before he approached Mareuil. The place was unfortified, and, as far as he could judge in passing through the little narrow street by which he first entered it, had an air of greater tranquillity and comfort than he had lately seen.

No house of public entertainment was apparent till he reached an open part of the street, near the centre of the little town, where a large stone building stood back from the rest, and displayed a wide front, with windows few and far between, and a single large archway for a door. Over this swung the sign of the inn, under a highly ornamented and gilded grating of iron-work; and as soon as the

feet of horses were heard in the dusty open space before the building, mine host and two of his palefreniers rushed forth to receive the new guests.

The night was clear, and the moon was up; and what between the assistance of the fair planet and the host's lantern, a very sufficient knowledge could be obtained in a moment of the persons of the strangers. That knowledge seemed in some degree to surprise and puzzle the landlord; and had Charles of Montsoreau remarked very acutely, he would have perceived that some one else had been expected in his place.

He noted not the demeanour of the landlord at all, however; but, springing from his horse, entered the archway, and passed through a door which stood ajar to the right, showing through the crevice a well lighted room within. It was one of the large open halls of an old French inn, the rafters low and black with smoke, the chimney wide and stretching out far into the room, the andirons, on which were piled up immense masses of wood, contain-

ing each more than one hundred weight of iron, and the table in the midst fit to support viands for forty or fifty people. The light which the young nobleman had seen proceeded both from the fire which was blazing and crackling cheerfully, and from two large sconces of polished brass hung in different parts of the room.

The hall possessed at the moment of the Count's entrance only one tenant, of whom he could see little more, than that he was dressed in grey of the most ordinary kind. His hat was on, and differed a good deal from the cap and feather then common at the court of France, being tall in the crown, broad in the brim, and decorated by a single cock's feather raising itself from the button on the right side. Large untanned riding-boots were drawn up above his knees, a light sword was by his side, as if he felt himself in perfect security; and he wore a falling collar of lace over his doublet, instead of the ruff, which was ordinary at that period. The buttons of the grey suit were of jet, and on the middle finger of his right hand was a large seal ring, of apparently coarse manufacture.

He was sitting at one of the farther corners of the table, with an inkhorn before him and a pen in his hand, busily writing on a sheet of coarse paper, which had been supplied to him by the host; so that looking at him as he sat, one might very well have taken him for some public notary of a neighbouring town, in not the best practice in the world.

Such, indeed, would have been the interpretation which Charles of Montsoreau would have put upon his appearance, had it not been for the somewhat Spanish cut of his hat, and the singular fashion of his collar, which puzzled him a good deal; for, notwithstanding the occupation of his mind with other thoughts, and the very ordinary apparel of the stranger, there was something in his form and aspect which attracted attention and excited curiosity in the young nobleman, he neither knew why nor how.

As soon as he heard a step entering the room, the stranger turned partially round and half rose from his seat; but a momentary glance was sufficient to show him that the person who

appeared was unknown to him; and, turning towards the table again, he pursued his occupation. The young count advanced slowly to the fire, and drawing a settle near, stretched out his feet to warm himself, turning his back to the stranger so as to avoid any air of scanning his proceedings. Gondrin and the other attendants came and went, asking him questions and directions as he thus sat; and from time to time the writer turned round his head and examined their movements and appearance, but without uttering a word. The aubergiste himself at length approached the fireplace, in order, it seemed, to consult with the young gentleman regarding his supper. There was but little, he said, in the house, and at that late hour it was impossible to procure much more. However, he would do his best, he added, and assured his new guest of at least giving him good wine.

Charles of Montsoreau informed him that he was easily satisfied, and doubted not that every thing would be good and abundant. But somewhat to his surprise—for such things were not at all customary in that day—the aubergiste pro-

ceeded to demand whether he would not pr
having a chamber apart to sup in, rather t
take his meal in the common hall. He wa
the act of replying in the negative, when
voice of the stranger who was writing at
table made itself heard for the first time,
claiming, in an authoritative tone, "Pi
Jean."

The innkeeper instantly flew to his side,
the other addressed him in a low tone, to wh
the innkeeper replied almost in a whisper.

"As you will, Maître Henri, as you will," s
the landlord in conclusion. "But I think
very strange they have not come."

The other merely nodded his head in re
and then folding up the paper he had writt
he put it in his pocket, and approached the
with an air of being quite at home. He w
man of about six or seven and thirty years
age, and, as he now stood before Charles
Montsoreau at his full height, appeared to
eyes of the young nobleman one of the m
powerful men he had ever beheld. His ch
was at once broad and deep, his limbs m

cular and long, the head small, the flanks thin, and the foot and hand well formed. Every indication was there of great strength and great activity, and the countenance also harmonised perfectly well with the figure, the broad high forehead giving that air of a powerful and active mind which we are all, whether physiognomists or not, inclined by nature to see in the expanse which covers and seems to represent the great instrument of the human intellect. He wore the mustachio somewhat long, and the beard pointed, but small. The eyes were large and fine, the eyebrows strongly marked, the nose was beautifully formed, displaying the wide expansive nostril, generally reckoned a sign of generous feelings; and though there was a cut upon his brow scarcely healed, and a deep scar in his cheek of a more remote date, yet they did not at all detract from the handsomeness of the countenance, which, notwithstanding the plainness of his dress and appearance, was peculiarly striking and attractive.

"This is a cold night, young gentleman," he said, as he approached the fire, "and you ride

out somewhat late for a traveller in these parts of the world."

"Oh, I fear not the cold," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "and though I certainly prefer not the night to travel in, yet, when I must betake myself to it, I do so without much discomfort or hesitation."

"Ay; but there are other things sweep over this country besides the wind," said the stranger, "things more cutting and more sharp, I can assure you."

"Oh, against those I go pretty well prepared also," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "every French gentleman is a soldier, you know; and we are not unwilling or unable to make use of our arms when it may be needful."

"You have served, I suppose," said the stranger, perhaps at Coutras, with the Duke of Joyeuse, or with Harry of Navarre and his Huguenots."

Charles of Montsoreau looked up with a smile. "If we begin talking of where we served, and on what causes, good sir," he said, "we shall have our worthy host, Pierre Jean, requiring us

to give up our swords into his safe keeping till we set out again, as indeed he is bound by law to do."

"Oh, no fear, no fear," replied the stranger, laughing. "We shall not quarrel and cut each other's throats, depend upon it. You are here, a young lord, with, it seems to me, a dozen or two of attendants, and I am alone, a poor Escribano, by name Maître Henri, as you just heard."

"And yet," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "the poor Escribano, I should judge, had seen some service in his day, and that not very many years ago either."

"Oh, you judge from that cut upon my forehead. That is but the scratch of a cat."

"Well, then," answered Charles, "if you will tell me sincerely whether that cat's claw was a reiter's estramaçon, or the spear of a De la Mark, I will tell you whether I drew my sword at Coutras, and on what part."

The stranger gazed at him for several moments, with an inquiring and yet half laughing glance.

"You are as keen," he said at length, "as a Gascon; perhaps, for aught I know, as ambitious as a Guise, as hardy and obstinate as a La Mark, and as politic and secret as a Brisson. The last, at least, I am sure of; and I can tell you, my good youth, if I judge right, we are not likely to part so soon as we both expected when you entered this room."

"Perhaps not, Maître Henri," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "for, if I judge rightly, and you are, as you say, alone, I am not likely to leave you till I see you safe on the other side of Rheims. There lie a strong body of reiters on the Chalons road; and there is one man in France for whom I have much love and respect, but who is somewhat too famous for exposing himself unnecessarily. I have but few men with me; but, well led, and with a great purpose, those few may do much."

The expression which the stranger's countenance assumed, as he listened to this speech, was strange and mingled. There was a smile came upon it, as if half amused, half touched; and yet there was a degree of doubt hung wa-

vering upon his brow, while he first scrutinised the countenance of his companion closely, and then, casting down his eyes, fell into a deep fit of thought. After a short pause, however, he replied,—"You fought at Coutras, sir, neither for Henry of Navarre nor Anne of Joyeuse, that is clear. Am I not right?"

"Quite, Maître Henri," replied the young count, with an air of indifference and a smile; "I fought neither for the heretics, because, Heaven be praised, I am a good Catholic, nor for the minions, because the hero of Jarnac and Montcoutour has passed away into a lover of pet puppies and a pedant in cosmetics."

A sarcastic smile curled the lip of his companion while he spoke. "Two good, wise, and sufficient reasons," he said, "such as a notary may approve of. But tell me, young gentleman, have we ever met before?"

"Never," answered Charles of Montsoreau, "unless we met before we were born. But, however, Maître Henri, to put an end to all doubts, that I see are in your mind, my name

is Charles of Montsoreau, Count of Logères, whom you may have heard of, perhaps, though he has yet to make a name in history, and hopes to do so with his sword."

The stranger instantly extended his hand to him, exclaiming, "Indeed, young friend, indeed! How came you here? What brought you to this part of the world?"

"I came for two purposes," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "In the first place, it is long since I have seen Logères; my tenantry need my presence; and it is time that I should take the management of those estates out of the hands of underlings, and defend, protect, and direct them myself."

While he spoke, several of his attendants returned to the room, accompanied by the host, to make preparation for the visiter's supper, and the stranger instantly resumed the position he had at first been standing in, after he approached the fire, while Charles of Montsoreau went on, taking a hint to be cautious from his companion's eyes. "In the next place," he continued, "my second purpose was to visit the

good Duke of Guise, who, I understand, is at Soissons, or in that neighbourhood."

"He was at Nancy but a week or two ago," replied the other; "but, after all, you may very likely find him at Soissons, for he is continually moving about the country; and there was a report not long ago, that he was to hold a private conference one of these days with Monsieur de Bellievre, sent on the part of the king. But there is little trust in this Henry, and Heaven knows whether he will send or not. —Shall we sup together, sir?"

"With all my heart," replied the young count, not a little to the surprise of some of his attendants who were in the room, and who did not at all comprehend how their lord, whom they were themselves accustomed to treat with much reverence and respect, came to sit down with a person of such plain apparel.

Their astonishment was not less when they beheld the young nobleman, after supper had been placed upon the table, wait till the other was seated, before he took his own place. The only one who seemed to understand the whole was the

boy Ignati, who said, in an under voice, to Gondrin, "He has forgotten himself, master huntsman! Or is Maître Henri gone for to-night?"

"And who is Maître Henri?" demanded Gondrin, in the same tone.

"I could tell, if I would," answered the boy, "but our lord knows him, if you do not."

Before he had well ended, a servant, dressed like his master, in grey, entered the room in haste, and placed a written paper in the hands of Maître Henri, who read it with attention, and then bending over the table towards Charles of Montsoreau, demanded, in a low tone, "How many men have you with you, my young friend?"

"Only seven," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "besides myself and the page. But they are all well-armed, resolute, and determined, and I, the eighth, trust not to be behind any of them."

"Eleven!" said his companion, musing. "We should but muster eleven if we were to set off this moment; for though we counted six amongst us when I arrived, I have sent off

three to a distance, and they cannot be back ere the morning. No, we had better wait till daylight. I must give them till twelve o'clock, too, to see if they will keep their word with me; though, by these tidings, it seems to be broken already.—Hark ye," he continued, speaking to the servant who had brought him the paper, and who still stood beside his chair—"hark ye; bend down your ear."

The man did as he was bidden; and, after whispering to him for several minutes, the stranger added, in a louder tone, "If you go by Les petites Loges, you will pass them. Tell him that fifty will do. I want no more, and we must not leave any point weak."

After he had thus spoken, he tore off a bit of the paper he had received, wrote a few words down upon it in a careless way, and tossed it over to Charles of Montsoreau. Those words were, "Schelandre, who you know is as brave as a lion and as cunning as a fox, is looking out for me, with two squadrons, on the road by Hautvilliers. He has got news of my coming

by some means—very likely from Henry himself."

Charles turned an inquiring look upon his companion's face, as if to ask, what is to be done? But the other glanced his eye over his shoulder towards the attendants, and proceeded with his supper, commenting upon the landlord's good cheer, praising his wine, and laughing and talking gaily, as if there were no such thing as peril upon the earth.

CHAP. X.

It was in the grey of the morning on the following day that a party of horsemen, now amounting in all to the number of fifteen or sixteen, was seen winding through the little wood, which at that time occupied the ground in the neighbourhood of Chaumizy, a spot which in the present day sends forth many an excellent bottle of sparkling wine, to warm the hearts of many a distant potator.

To any eye which watched the progress of that party from a height — and there was an eye which did so — the movements of the band might seem complicated and curious, — now turning to the east, now winding to the west — now marching on straight forward to the north. One thing, however, was evident, that those horsemen affected by-paths and shady roads, never crossing a hill where they could

take their way through the valley, never choosing the open ground where they could go through the wood. Sometimes the eye which, as we have said, watched them from the most elevated ground in the neighbourhood, lost them for several minutes amongst the trees and vineyards, sometimes saw them emerge when it least expected them, sometimes was baffled altogether in regard to a conception of their onward course, by the strange turns and windings which they took.

Nevertheless the band still continued to advance in its own way, winding amidst the brown leafless woods, with Charles of Montsoreau completely armed at its head; Gondrin, little less formidably equipped by his side on the right hand, and the boy Ignati, now dressed completely as a page, with pistols at his saddle-bow, and a strong dagger on his thigh, upon the left hand of the young nobleman. Then came, mixed together, the attendants of the Count — all as we have described them before, strongly armed; — two or three strangers of military appearance, clothed in general in grey

suits with a double black cross observable on some parts of their garments; and two or three hardy spirits from the little village of Mareuil, who had been hired to swell the numbers of the Count's train, as they passed across the dangerous part of the country between Chalons and Rheims.

Amongst the rest of the persons thus mixed together, might be observed Maître Henri, dressed precisely as he had been the night before, though most of the other personages in grey had contrived to purchase in the village of Mareuil several pieces of defensive and offensive armour, such as steel caps, called salads, breast plates, and the large heavy swords then in use against cavalry, which, like the attendants of Charles of Montsoreau, they bore naked in their hands.

Very few words were uttered as the band rode along: sometimes an order was given in a low voice by the young count, sometimes, while the rest continued to advance, he rode back, to speak to some one in the rear, sometimes he addressed a few words to Gondrin

or the page; but in general all passed in silence.

"Are you sure you know your way?" he demanded at length of the boy Ignati, on their suddenly taking a path which appeared more than usually out of the direct course.

"As well as I know the lines on my own hand, sir," replied the boy in the Italian language, which he had discovered that his master understood. "I would rather lose my eyes than lead you or him a step wrong."

"Who do you mean by him?" demanded Charles of Montsoreau, in the same tongue.

"I mean him with the scar," replied the boy.

"Why, what is he to thee?" asked his master.

"Why, he is the only one in all the land," replied the boy, "that ever was kind to me before yourself; and I remember seven months ago, when they made me dance and sing at a great banquet in the town of Nancy, he patted my head, and called me a good youth, and while all the rest showered money into the box my

master carried round, he gave me a broad piece, and told me it was for myself. They took it from me afterwards: but he did not know that."

"Then recollect him, and you know him?" demanded his master.

"Grey cloth and brown baize will not hide him from me," replied the boy, with an intelligent smile, "though when I saw him, it was crimson velvet and gold. The heart has its eyes, dear lord, as well as the head, and the heart's eyes never forget."

"Well then, Ignati," replied the Count, "in case of any attack — which we cannot be sure will not take place — you attach yourself to his side, quit him not for a moment, serve him in every thing; but in the very first place guide him on towards Rheims, by the safest paths that you know."

"But must I leave you?" demanded the boy—"must I leave you in the hands of the enemy?"

"Never mind me," replied his master—"I will defend myself, good Ignati. Besides, they

can scarcely be called my enemies, as I have taken no service against them."

Just as he spoke, the band issued forth from the little by-path which they had been pursuing, into one of the main roads through the wood, and saw before them, at the distance of about a hundred yards, an old grey stone cross, raised upon several steps, in the very centre of the road, marking the spot where two ways crossed. When first they came within sight of that memento of past years, the ground around it was completely solitary: but before they reached it, five or six heavy armed horsemen came at a quick pace up the road leading to the left and planted themselves round the cross. The moment they reached it, one of their party took off his steel cap, and waved it in the air, looking at the same time down the road by which he had come, as if giving a signal to some persons who followed him.

To the eyes of Charles of Montsoreau and his companions these indications wanted no explanation, nor was any consultation necessary; for it was evident that there was but one thing

to be done, namely, to endeavour to force a passage through this little advanced party of the reiters before the main body could come up.

"Quick to the side of Maître Henri," exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, speaking to the page. "You, Gondrin, too, attach yourself to him. Leave nothing undone to secure his escape; and now forward, my men! Upon them!"

He turned one anxious glance round in the direction of his newly acquired companion; but saw — with some surprise, perhaps — nothing but a calm, unperturbed smile on his countenance. Maître Henri was quietly drawing his sword from its sheath, and in answer to the anxious look of Charles of Montsoreau, only gave a familiar nod, saying, "Go on!"

The young count's orders had been already given, and his horse was instantly put into the gallop. The reiters on their part seemed to require neither parley nor explanation any more than the young count; and instantly separating into two parties, they occupied the

road on either side of the cross: he, who
evidently the commander, again waving
steel cap in the same direction as before.

Charles of Montsoreau saw that all depend
upon speed, and the prompt execution of his co
mands; and, turning to the man who follow
immediately behind him, he exclaimed, with
at all checking his pace as he did so, "P
round to the right of the cross with two othe
but where the passage is forced, attach yo
self to drive back the men on the left of
cross, up the road to the left; while I with
rest bar that road against those that are comi
up."

The man seemed to understand at a wo
and in a moment more they were at the s
where the two roads crossed. As he came
Charles of Montsoreau turned his head for
instant, and, to his great satisfaction, saw tha
large body of horse, which was coming do
at full speed, was still at a considerable d
tance.

That turning of his head, however, l
nearly cost him his life; for the three men i

mediately behind him, having been detached to the other side, one of the reiters, emboldened by this circumstance, spurred suddenly forward, and aimed a long heavy stroke at the head of the young nobleman, which struck him upon the neck, and had it not been for the goodness of his arms, must inevitably have killed him on the spot. As it was, the blow made the count bend almost to his saddle-bow: but it was only to raise himself again immediately, and to return the blow with a force and vigour which cast the reiter headlong from his horse.

At the same time the three men whom he had detached, passed round to the right of the cross. The reiters, who were opposed to them on that side, prepared to stop their progress; but as they were about to do so, they perceived Gondrin, the page, and Maître Henri, with one of his attendants, advancing at full speed a little further to the right. This was enough to make them desist their opposition to the others, and turn to close the path on that side, while the three followers of Charles of Montsoreau, taking advantage of the space thus left, wheeled

upon the men on the left side of the cross, and drove them back, trampling upon their fallen companion.

The young nobleman, as soon as he saw the success of this manœuvre, drew in his rein for a moment, in order to suffer it to be fully executed, and the reiters to be driven back into the road up which they had come. On the other hand, they, finding themselves decidedly overmatched, suffered this to be accomplished with ease, and made the best of their way back towards the larger body of their comrades, who were now coming down at full speed to their support.

The moment that Charles of Montsoreau saw this accomplished, he turned his head once more to Maître Henri, exclaiming, "On, on, with all speed! I will insure you at least ten minutes:" and then, without waiting for any answer, he brought the greater part of his men into the road down which the chief body of the reiters was advancing, and prepared, as best he might, to stand the coming shock, which was certain to be tremendous.

In the mean while, Maître Henri, with Gondrin on one side, and the boy on the other, had advanced at full speed towards the three reiters on the right of the cross. One of the stranger's own attendants followed only a step behind; but as they came up, a fierce-looking, powerful man, from amongst their opponents, aimed his petronel right at the head of Maître Henri, exclaiming, "I know thee! I know thee!" and was in the very act of firing, when the page, making his horse spring forward, endeavoured to grasp the muzzle of the piece.

He did not succeed entirely, but was enabled to turn the weapon in some degree, so that the ball passed through the tall Spanish hat of Maître Henri; and being fired from the higher ground on which the cross stood, entered the head of the attendant who was coming up behind, and killed him on the spot. The contest at that point was thus rendered a very unequal one, there being but two men, and one of those nearly unarmed, with a boy of fourteen or fifteen, opposed to three strong and well-armed men. As all knew, however, that the party headed

by Charles of Montsoreau could maintain the road but a very short time against the force coming down upon him, the gain or loss of a minute was every thing to those who were struggling on the right of the cross. The long heavy sword usually borne by the reiter was but feebly opposed by the light weapon of Maître Henri; but that light weapon was used with a degree of skill, coolness, and presence of mind which made up for the disparity; and, with the page still close to his side, he was driving back his immediate opponent, warding off every sweep of his heavy blade, pressing him so hard whenever he paused for a moment, as to prevent him from snatching one of the pistols from his saddle-bow, and gradually urging his own charger onward, till he had very nearly cleared the road before him, when one of the other two reiters—who had hitherto attached themselves to Gondrin, as the only completely equipped man-at-arms of the opposite party—turned suddenly upon Maître Henri, and assailed him on the right, while the other rapidly recovered his ground upon the left.

Never, however, did skill, strength, and presence of mind, do so much for one individual as they did for the man in grey. For a moment or two he applied himself solely to the defensive, wheeling his horse from the one to the other, as they attacked him with the most extraordinary rapidity and skill,—now parrying one blow, now parrying another, and still watching for an opportunity of resuming the offensive. At length the reiter who was assailing him on his right hand, seeing that their other companion had by this time been well nigh mastered by Gondrin, determined to end all by killing the horse of the man opposed to him, and with the bridle in his teeth, and his sword in both hands, aimed a tremendous blow at the poor animal's head: but Maître Henri instantly divining his intention, turned the spur sharply into the horse's side, and reined him to the left at the same time.

The noble animal, practised for years to comprehend the slightest indication of its rider's will, instantly took a demivolte, as it was called, to the left with a sharp spring. The

reiter's sword descended with tremendous force; but the object at which he had aimed was just beyond his reach, and the weight of the sword, with the impetus he had given the blow, nearly threw him from the saddle, making him bend down to his saddle-bow. The opportunity was all that his opponent desired; his horse was turned like lightning, and before the man could raise himself, he received a severe wound in the back of the neck, which made heaven and earth, and the whole scene around, swim dizzily before his eyes.

The other reiter on the left, however, was upon the successful swordsman in a moment. By this time his pistol was in his hand, and a very slight movement brought the muzzle within a foot of Maître Henri's bosom.

That advantage retained for one single second more might have changed the destiny of many thousands of human beings; but at the very moment that he was sure of his aim, and about to draw the trigger, a strong, well-aimed, unhesitating blow from the hand of the page, drove the dagger, with which he was armed,

under the very arm which held the pistol, between it and his corselet. So strong, so determined was that blow, that the weapon entered to the very haft, and there remained, fixed between the corselet and the brassard, so that the boy could not withdraw it.

But that mattered not, the weapon had cut through many a vital part in its passage; the sick faintness of death came upon the man's heart and brain; the pistol and the reins dropped from his hands; and, after a reeling attempt to keep the saddle, he fell headlong to the ground.

One glance of the eye had shown Maître Henri all that took place; and without uttering a word, he continued the fight with his other antagonist, taking advantage of the wound he had given him, and pressing him so hard, that at length the horse, reined back upon the slippery ground of the forest road, reared, and fell over with his rider, crushing him under its weight.

By this time, though the space that had elapsed was very short, Gondrin had so far

got the better of his antagonist, that the man's steel cap had fallen off under the repeated blows of the huntsman, and a deep bleeding wound in the forehead showed that the protection of the casque was not a little wanting. The sight of one of his companions dead upon the ground, and of the horse falling over with the other, did not give him any very great encouragement to pursue the strife; and he was making the best of his way, closely pursued by Gondrin, towards the branch of the road which led up to the right, when the voice of Maître Henri attracted the huntsman's ear, exclaiming, "Leave him, leave him! Let us make our way onward, with all speed, now that the road is clear."

Gondrin certainly asked himself, "Is it fair and right to leave my noble master thus?" But the orders of that master had been distinct, and he obeyed at all risks, following Maître Henri, who galloped on with a degree of speed which, to the eyes of the huntsman, seemed somewhat unseemly. At the distance of about a mile and a half, however, the road

took a turn to the left; and, in a moment, a large body of horse was before the eyes of the fugitives, advancing at a somewhat quick pace towards the scene where the late contest had taken place. On the left breast of each corselet appeared a double cross; and, without drawing his rein for a moment, Maître Henri galloped up towards them, while a loud shout of "The Duke! the Duke!" burst from the ranks of the soldiery.

Few, however, were the words which the man in grey spoke. He wheeled his horse at their head, bade Gondrin and the page get into the rear; adding, "You have had fighting enough for to-day, my friends," — and in a moment the whole body was put to full speed, and advancing towards the cross, in the heart of the wood.

They came but up in time, however; for Charles of Montsoreau, though contending pertinaciously for every inch of ground, from a knowledge of how needful was each moment to his companion, had been driven back by superior numbers into the other road, and,

though still keeping his face to the enemy, and closing the path against them, was losing ground rapidly.

In the first shock with the reiters, he had turned his head to ascertain that there was no space left for the passage of the enemy, and had beheld, to his surprise, that two or three of Maître Henri's servants had remained with him, instead of following their master. In answer to an exclamation expressive of his surprise, however, one of the men merely replied, "It was his order;" and the fierceness of the struggle that ensued left no room for farther inquiry.

The number of reiters amounted to at least fifty men; and had the space been open, the young cavalier must have been overpowered in a moment. But the arrival, nay, the very sight, of the strong body that now came down to his assistance, changed in a moment the aspect of the whole scene.

At a single word from the lips of Maître Henri, the lances of the three first lines of his men were levelled in an instant; th

reiters halted in mid-career; and Charles of Montsoreau, at once comprehending what had occurred, opened the way, as far as possible, by drawing his wounded and weary followers out of the road, and plunging their horses, where they could, in amongst the trees. The reiters wavered for a moment, as if hesitating whether to retreat at once, or endeavour to make a stand; but so sudden and unexpected was the appearance of the adverse horse, that nothing had been prepared for retreat; and the commander found himself forced to maintain his ground for a time, till the ranks that followed could be wheeled and withdrawn.

In the mean time, with loud cries of "Lorraine! Lorraine*! A Guise! a Guise!" the adverse cavalry came down; but the German horse could not stand for a moment before the long lances of the men-at-arms, and in a few minutes all was confusion, flight, and pursuit.

As soon as the cavalry of Lorraine had

* The Duke of Guise was at this time employing several bodies of troops levied in Lorraine, against the Princes of Sedan.

passed by, Charles of Montsoreau drew his men out again from the wood, and, perfectly secure from any further annoyance, began to count his loss, and to examine into the state of the wounded men who had continued to fight on by his side. He himself was bleeding from a sharp wound in the head, received from so strong a blow of one of the reiter's heavy swords, that not even his steel cap had been able to protect him. He had another wound, also, from a pistol ball in the left arm; but it was very slight, and had not prevented him from managing his horse with ease. Almost every man about him was more or less wounded, and some severely, but only two had been left on the ground from which he had been driven; and he hastened on after the two parties still engaged in conflict, to see for those who were thus missing.

Luckily, the reiters, in their retreat, had followed the straight road behind them, instead of taking that by which they came; otherwise the whole force of charging cavalry must have passed over the young count's two followers.

One of them was still living, and afterwards recovered, though he was at the time so severely wounded in the leg that he could not move from the spot where he lay. The other was quite dead, a pistol ball having passed through his head.

The road through the wood was now, for a minute or two, turned into an hospital; and all that was possible was done to stanch the bleeding of the wounds which had been received, and to put the men in a state to pursue their onward journey towards Rheims. Nor were the wounded reiters themselves neglected; for Charles of Montsoreau was not one to forget, as soon as the eagerness of the actual strife was over, that his adversaries were his fellow-men.

This had been scarcely completed, and the young count once more on horseback again, when the sound of distant trumpets ringing merrily through the wood gave notice that the horsemen of Lorraine were on their return; and in a few minutes after a group of some six or seven cavaliers, with Maître Henri at their head, appeared coming up the road, fol-

lowed at the distance of a couple of hundred yards by the body of cavalry he had met with so opportunely. All was laughter and merriment amongst the little group of officers; and, though Maître Henri himself was not loud in his mirth, he came on smiling at the jests and gibes of the others, and sometimes answering them in the same strain, though with a manner somewhat chastened and stately.

At the distance of about twenty or five and twenty yards from the young count, he held up his hand to the troops that followed, pronouncing the word "Halt!" Then riding up with his group of officers, he grasped Charles of Montsoreau warmly by the hand; and, turning to those who followed, said, "Noble lords, to this gallant gentleman, to his courage, skill, determination, and good faith, I owe life or liberty. You are witnesses that, in the fullest manner, I acknowledge the debt, and that in no manner will I fail to pay it, when he chooses to call upon me."

"Your highness is too generous in your consideration of the service," replied Charles of

Montsoreau. "I came from a distant part of France to seek you, in order to offer you my poor services — perhaps somewhat tardily — in your efforts to chase from the soil of our native country bands of foreign adventurers who have no business to meddle with our intestine quarrels. I found you likely to be surprised by accident by one of those bands; and what could I do less than assist you to the utmost of my power?"

"Our views of the extent of the service," replied the Duke of Guise, with the bright smile of his house playing on his lip, "must be somewhat different, I fear, my young friend. But now we have met, we will not part speedily. You must be my guest, and go on with me, first to Rheims, and then to Soissons, with all speed. There we will talk of our future alliance; for the Count de Logères and the Duke of Guise shall treat together as crown to crown, and nobody call it treason. I have," he continued in a lower voice, but with a marked and meaning smile — "I have to ask you many questions in regard to a fair child of our house, who has,

according to her letters and to yours, s
ceived the same protection and defence
your hands which you have this day afford
her uncle. Perhaps it may be on her a
count that you come to seek me. Is it so, go
friend?"

The words of the Duke — those wor
which, under other circumstances, might ha
been the brightest and the dearest to the hea
of Charles of Montsoreau — now entered in
his spirit like a sword. The beaming smile
his race upon the lip of the princely Gui
called up before the eye of fancy in a mome
the form of the beautiful and beloved bein
on whose countenance he had first seen it. A
his tenderness — all his affection for her — a
the deep, unchangeable attachment of his hea
— were felt at that moment more deeply, mo
powerfully, than ever; but, at the same tim
strong upon his mind, came the bitter resolutio
he had taken to yield his hopes of happiness, t
cast away his chance, his most probable chanc
of the brightest joy that fancy could dream o
and to yield to the brother who had ill-treate

him all those advantages which he himself of right possessed.

The blood fled from his cheek to his heart, as if to strengthen it against the pains and against the temptations of that moment; and the Duke of Guise, seeing him turn very pale, judged, perhaps, wrongly of his feelings, and again grasped him by the hand, saying, "Fear not, fear not, good friend. Come, let us on upon our way. I may meet with tidings at Rheims to hasten my progress onwards."

CHAP. XI.

During the two days that followe recorded in the last few pages, Char soreau had scarcely any opportunity with the Duke of Guise, without th of listeners around, which renders tion general and frequently insigni true he dwelt in the same splendid served the Duke for his residence i Rheims; that he dined with him table; that he was present on ev when he received the nobles who flo him. But the continual press of various kinds, the constant comin of couriers from and to Paris and writing of letters that seemed innu the almost hourly consultations w

Duke of Guise, and to leave him no space for either thought or repose.

At length on the third morning, when the young nobleman had breakfasted with the Duke in company with the Duke of Nemours, the Baron d'Aussonville, the bailiff of St. Michael, and a number of other gentlemen, with two or three ladies of the good town of Rheims — who seemed not a little anxious to attract the attention of the Duke — Guise, on rising to proceed to other business, drew his young friend aside for a moment, and asked him some questions concerning the wounded men. The Count replied that they all bade fair to recover; and after a few words more, spoken in the same tone, and evidently intended for the ears of those around, though apparently addressed to him in private, the Duke dropped his voice nearly to a whisper, saying, "I have much to talk with you about. Sup with me alone to-night at nine o'clock, when I trust we shall have time to make all our arrangements."

Charles of Montsoreau did not miss the hour; but descending from the apartments which had

been assigned to him, and which were immediately over those of the Duke, he proceeded to the hall where he had usually found him, but in which he now met with no one but a solitary lute-player, a great favourite with the Duke of Guise. The musician was now seated with his instrument in his hand, with one of his feet raised upon the huge andirons of the fireplace, and his hands employed in striking from time to time a few low and listless sounds from the instrument that lay upon his knee. The man had thus been apparently left solitary for some time; for no sooner did Charles of Montsoreau appear, than, seizing him by one of the buttons of his doublet, he began to tell him a long story, of not the most interesting kind, from which the young count would willingly have delivered himself.

Perhaps the greatest art of human benevolence that can be conceived, is that of listening with a tolerable appearance of satisfaction to a tiresome tale; and Charles of Montsoreau, whose heart was really kind and gentle, and who had not yet learned in the great wise school of the

world the lesson of treading upon the feelings of others, did his best to seem interested, till one of the Duke's servants entered the room, and, after a glance around, retired without any further announcement. A moment or two after, while the young nobleman was still in the sort of durance in which the lute-player held him, the servant again made his appearance, and, walking straight up to him, informed him that the Duke wished to speak with him in his cabinet.

"Show me the way," said the young nobleman, detaching his button from the grasp of the musician — "show me the way, and I will come directly."

"Oh, I will go with you, and show you the way," exclaimed the lute-player: "I 've no idea of staying here all by myself, as melancholy as a rat in a rat-trap."

"His Highness particularly said," observed the servant in a dry tone, "that he wished to converse with Monsieur de Logères alone."

The lute-player looked confounded and mortified; but Charles of Montsoreau, not a little

somewhat lengthened octangular r
throughout with dark black oak, car
most exquisite manner. From th
the ceiling hung a silver chain, bear
lamp of the same material, with eig
At the further end of the room w
place, and in the midst a small tab
covers and a number of dishes a
silver, some plain, some jewelled at

The Duke himself was standing a
side with his back to the fire, readin
the light of a small lamp which s
over his shoulder; and certainly
there, now dressed in the magnific
of those days, partially reclining
projecting chimney, with the letter
hand, the light of the lamp stream

that part of the room, there probably never was any thing so graceful, so princely, so dignified, as his whole appearance.

He folded up the letter as soon as Charles of Montsoreau's step sounded in the cabinet, and banishing a slight frown which had been upon his brow while reading, he advanced to the table with a smile saying, "Our viands are getting cold, Monsieur le Comte."

"I went into the usual hall," replied the young nobleman, "not knowing where to find your Highness, and fearful of intruding upon you."

"I should have told you, I should have told you, dear friend," replied the Duke: "when I wish to have an hour in private for conversation with any of my most confidential friends, I sup in my own cabinet, which is the only place to which my worthy countrymen and acquaintances will grant the right of sanctuary, — Now Martinez," he continued, speaking to the servant, "uncover the dishes, put us down some good wine, bring me in a *naquet* to hold our dirty platters, and then leave us."

bringing in a sort of buffet on a s
somewhat like what we now call a du
but which was then called by the
naquet, (though that word was onl
applied to the marker of a tennis
retired, shutting the door closely bel

"This is an hour of relief," said
as soon as the man was gone; "fo
ness to-night, dear count, must of
light and easy to us both — light to y
you have nothing to do but to ex
wishes and desires to Henry of Guis
to me, as nothing can be more jo
heart than to show my gratitude for
that you have rendered me, and to
every manner in my power, my este
gard for yourself, and my admiratic

"Oh, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "I thought you had forgotten by this time to use such high-flown expressions towards me."

"Call them not high-flown, good friend," replied the Duke: "persons situated as I am, dealing with and often obliged of sheer necessity to excite the worst passions of our fellow-creatures, meet so rarely with frank, disinterested service, that when it comes upon us in the sudden way that yours has come upon me, without claim, without expectation, without any previous notice, it strikes us as something both wonderful and beautiful; and we admire, as we would the visit of an angel, that which gives us a view of a fairer state of being than the one with which our daily thoughts are familiar. Besides, if I must own the truth, too, there was something in the frankness — some of my adulators would call it the bluntness — with which you dealt with me in the little inn at Mareuil, evidently knowing

read any of his letters to Bassompierre, or any other of his personal friends, to see with what openhearted affection he dealt with them.

truce to all fine speeches: let us
supper; and after doing justice to wl
Lanecque has set before us, we will
matter further at our ease."

Although the cookery of that day
plified in a small but refined sup
Duke of Guise, might well astonish,
its materials and its combinations,
culinary artists of the present day
Duke and his young friend found i
and every thing was praised as it
The wine also was of the finest kind
be procured, and the Duke was lil
but Charles of Montsoreau was not
tempted by any vintage to drink mo
beneficial to him either corporeally o
and though the Duke of Guise c

had none of those designs which lead wily politicians sometimes to press the wine-cup upon a tyro. He might, it is true, be somewhat surprised at the easy and courtly grace with which a young nobleman, educated almost entirely in the provinces, met and mingled with the highest and most stately in the land; and he might, consequently, be a little inclined to see him off his guard; but when he found that he was not disposed to take any more, he abstained from asking him, and pursued the subject of their former discourse, interrupted by various little remarks upon things of an ordinary character, touching them, however, with grace and ease, which raised them all, and made them harmonise with graver discourse.

"Now, Monsieur de Logères," he said, as soon as he had passed to his young friend the dish at his end of the table with which they commenced the meal, "tell me clearly and exactly what were your motives and your views in coming hither from so far to seek me; for it would seem that you have been acting entirely independently of your brother. Speak to me,

perience, to claim that title, though in not I who have given you life, but you I owe it."

" It is scarcely either needful or po Lord," replied the young count, " for your Highness more than I have alr In the first place, I came to see m Logères, which, as you well know, lie forty or fifty miles from this spot—a journey. I have only seen them onc death of my father. I have withdra small part of the revenues from the ment of the territory, and the enco of the peasantry; and it is time tha now see what is the state of the whol same time, I thought and believed remained somewhat too long a specta

Duke of Guise. The first seemed to me out of the question, though a gallant and a noble prince; for, waging war as he does, for the advancement of heresy, it was not for me to draw my sword in such a cause. Between the other two there could surely be no question; for though I may not think your Highness always right in every thing that you have done, yet as a gallant and a knightly leader, as one whom a brave and true-hearted man may follow, there is none whom I know that I could choose against yourself from one end of Europe to the other. In attaching myself to you, too, I trust and am sure that I do not ill serve my king; and, to say but the truth, I would far rather serve his Majesty under another, than come within the reach of his perfumes and cosmetics."

The Duke of Guise smiled, and leaning his arm upon the table, gazed down for a moment or two in a meditative mood, not a little struck and surprised at the calm and reasoning, but bold and straight-forward frankness with which his young companion spoke. Perhaps, too, he traced back into the past the various motives

he might find none amongst thei
actuated by such feelings as t
before him. He was silent fo
ments then; and the first thing t
was the young count adding, t
said, "Indeed, my Lord, this w
simple motive."

"I doubt it not, Monsieur d
plied the Duke, drawing towar
dish — "I doubt it not; and thi
simple salmi, and apparently a
ever was cooked; but still, if
Maître Lanecque to analyse i
friend, you will find it an ant
the poisons and evils of the inn
other such pestiferous places -
saying, if you were to ask Maî

themselves, and contribute to make the woodcock better. And thus it is in life. Every human motive is a salmi, cooked by a skilful artist, for our own palates as well as those that observe them. There is one grand and apparent cause of action, which may be considered as the woodcock, but there are a thousand minor motives, incentives, and inducements, the condiments, the gravies, the truffles, the toast, which nobody ever thinks of counting, which pass, in fact, under cover of the woodcock, and which, nevertheless, all tend to make the salmi what it is. Now, I have no doubt on earth, my dear young friend, that the great motive of your coming hither was what you say; but were there not other motives joined therewith — feelings, designs, views, and purposes of your own, all mingling together, to aid and strengthen your original motive — in fact, to make up the salmi?"

Charles of Montsoreau knew and felt that there were; for he could not help remembering the real cause of his quitting his brother's dwelling in such haste, and the resolutions then taken,

to him. He now looked down the
a moment; but he was by nature
and open to conceal his thoughts fi
sought them in the way which they
by the Duke of Guise.

" My Lord," he said, " if yo
means to ask, whether there were
private feelings which induced n
plunge into contentions from whic
withheld myself, and combined wit
public motives which otherwise ca
so to do, I by no means deny tha
such feelings; and had it not bee
though I certainly think I shoul
your Highness before many month
yet it might not have been so earl
timely as it has turned out."

so particularly. Tell me, has not a fair relation of mine, who has found a place of refuge in the castle of Montsoreau — has she not something to do with the motives that you speak of?"

"She has, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau — "but not in the way which I see you imagine."

The Duke laughed. "What!" he exclaimed, — "pretty Mistress Marie of Clairvaut has, I suppose, been acting the prude with you, as usual, and gave you warning, when it was too late, that she intended to plunge herself into a convent. Take heart of grace, man — take heart of grace. Though she has ever yet shown herself, in these affairs of love, as cold as the top of the Vosges, and as hard as the nether-millstone, yet she is always candid and true, poor girl; and in two letters which have reached me from her hand, the one sent by your own courier, the other arriving to-day, she speaks of you, and of your services towards her, in terms that admit of no mistake. I do not mean to say you know that you have won her heart, because her heart

her too."

There is nothing so terrible on eart some friendly hand approaches to ot cup of joy, seeing not, knowing no must not, that we dare not, that drink, when accidental words, per kindly spoken, present to the eye o colours more vivid than ever, the pi were once painted by the hand of every fair reality that they represent away, and nothing remains but th and the endurance. Terrible, inde temptation of Charles of Montsorea ble the struggle in his bosom. Not th himself could exhort man to break l tions more powerfully, than did the w with the best intentions by the Duk

to endure. Had the Duke said that he knew her heart was won, those few words would have put all his resolutions to an end; but he implied that her heart was not won, and it was upon that persuasion that all his purposes had been hitherto framed.

The Duke of Guise saw him once more turn very pale, and was not a little puzzled to divine the cause. "Why do you not answer?" he demanded, after pausing for a moment or two. "In consideration of a vast service, I have spoken to you as I would to no other man under a prince's dignity in Europe."

"And I am most grateful, my Lord," replied the Count; "but your Highness has mistaken me. My pretensions to the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut are too small, too few to be thought of even by myself. My brother, indeed, may have greater pretensions. Your Highness knows that his estates in the south are considerable; that his race, though certainly not equal to that of the princely house of Guise, is as old and as pure as any in France; but he

attachments, and even more zealou
than I am in every thing he under
any little services of mine, my Lor
buted to him; let him also serve and
self to your Highness; and let the
affection and zeal of both in your c
you to look favourably upon his
should he aspire to the hand of M
de Clairvaut."

"By my faith," exclaimed the Du
pushing the glass of wine which
about to drink away from him—"
this is the most extraordinary piece
I think, I ever heard of!" And
thoughtfully gazing down upon
"You are a strange youth," he con
there is something under this wl

epistle from your brother; an epistle which, though eloquent enough, well written, clear, and masterly, yet I love not altogether. He tells me, that the passports for my niece, from Henri of Navarre, have arrived; but that he judges it best, seeing the troubled state of the country, to escort her towards Soissons himself, with a sufficient band to protect her against any attack. He speaks of you, too, as '*a brother of his*,' and gives as a reason for delaying a day or two ere he sets out, that you had taken with you on your journey some men from the castle, so that it is necessary for him to increase his numbers ere he departs."

"That was hardly generous of him," said Charles of Montsoreau, calmly; "for I took no more than my own immediate retainers, except, indeed, the one man, Gondrin, whom your Highness knows, and who was born upon my own lands of Logères."

"Oh, I know him well, indeed," replied the Duke, "and owe him much. We will have him and the page in before we part, that I may

"I ask you much, when I ask yo
honour and the pleasure of serving u
and also express the hope that you w
treat me and consider me as now."

"Oh, such requests are easily gran
the Duke: "you shall command a c
my Albanians, and be ever near m
but still I shall consider that there is
be paid, and shall reserve the payme
for a year; and if you name not your
by that time, I shall force my grati
you. There is some mystery in yo
which at present I do not understand
earthly mysteries disappear, my g
friend. When they represented T
would have done well to put a to
hand as well as a scythe, for he th

the head of my own people. Give me but a month away from you, and I will bring you a hundred steel-caps from Logères, mounted, armed, and trained as well as any cavaliers in France. All the tenantry are bred to arms there from their infancy, so that but a short space will suffice."

"You are resolved to make me still more your debtor," said the Duke; "and I will acknowledge, that at the present moment the assistance of every brave and true-hearted man in France is needful to Henry of Guise; for oh, my young friend, I have to deal with as wily a serpent as ever was hatched in the Asiatic deserts. Were it but Henry of Navarre I had to deal with, the contest in this country would soon be settled, for as gallant a knight, and as noble a gentleman is he, as ever lived; frank, generous, and true; and with our lances in our hands and our helmets on our heads, we could decide the fate of France between us in an hour. But when I have to deal with one who, professing love and friendship, would poison the chalice, or arm the assassin's hand against me;

who, while he feigns to listen to my counsel, deals secretly with every enemy of his state and of his country; who betrays every secret that is intrusted to him as soon as he finds an interest in so doing; and who only sinks from the activity of evil-doing into voluptuous, effeminate, indecent repose;—when I have to deal with such a man as that, I say, the support of every true man in France is needful to me, to free my country from the evils that afflict her—never forgetting my duty to the crown. Go, my young friend, arm your vassals, bring to me every man that you can command, and you shall find Henry of Lorraine as deeply grateful to you for this new service as he is for that which is past. I will make no further professions to you. What I have said already ought to be enough to convince you, that with me, at least, neither the pride nor the ambition, of which they unjustly accuse our race, can stand in the way of gratitude. Now, however, let us have in your man Gondrin and your little page. He speaks, it seems to me, with a foreign accent. Where did you get him?"

As he spoke, the Duke rang a silver bell which stood by his side, and gave orders to the servant who appeared to seek for the two attendants of the young Count, and bring them before him. While he was absent, Charles of Montsoreau gave him a full account of his accidental meeting with the boy Ignati, and of his redeeming him from the hands of the Italians. The tale seemed to interest the Duke not a little; and, after musing for a moment, he said, "You see, my young friend, how kindness and services always render men greedy. I would to heaven that you would give me these two who have gone with me through such a moment of peril. I feel as if that boy were destined again to do me some great service."

"Take him, my Lord, with all my heart," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "not that I put any great faith in such presentiments; but as I redeemed the boy from these men only for his own good, far be it from me to stay him in any way from advancement. Your Highness remembers, however, that he is not noble, and therefore can scarcely be your page."

shall make him noble. ...
Come hither, good youth," he ad
boy and Gondrin entered — " let
your face: it seems to me as if I h
somewhere before. Your look plea
memory seems to bring it back wit
Where have I beheld you?"

The boy looked up in the Duke'
his colour slightly heightened, but
calm and self-possessed. "You ha
my Lord," he said, "in the good to
in the palace of the noble Duke
upon the night of a high festival,
gallant lord and many a bright la
you; and a poor Italian boy was
dance and sing before the high
you feasted. The princes, and th
... women, and the

laid his hand upon his head, thanked him for his music, and gave him a broad piece of gold for himself."

"I remember," said the Duke, thoughtfully, "I remember. Well, boy, by that kind word, and that broad piece, it seems I have purchased service that never was bought at so light a rate. My good Lord of Logères, when the pistol of a reiter was within a foot of my breast, his finger on the trigger, and my life apparently at his mercy, with nothing but a grey doublet between me and destruction, this boy proved better to me than a breastplate of Milan steel, and, by driving his dagger into the heart of my adversary, saved the life of Henry of Guise, for whatever period God in his grace may grant it further. Will you give me this youth, my Lord, to be my page?"

The young Count bowed his head in token of assent, and the Duke went on. "What say you, boy? would you willingly serve me?"

The boy paused, and looked down, while the tears rose in his eyes. Then, turning his look

Charles of Montsoreau, he said, "He has been very kind to me!"

"Come, come, Ignati," said the young Count, I will not have your heart spoil your fortunes, my good youth. I took you for your own service, not for mine; and though I like you well, and would willingly have you with me, yet this is a noble offer, and must not be refused."

The boy then knelt down and kissed the Duke of Guise's hand, saying, "I am your Highness's servant."

"So shalt thou be, Ignati," replied the Duke, with one of the bright smiles of the Guise. "But I will tell thee what thou shalt do. Thou shalt go with this young lord to his lands of Logères, and be my spy upon all his actions and his thoughts. Then, if thou findest out that thing on all the earth which he most wishes and desires to possess, and bringest me the tidings thereof, thou shalt have a purse of broad pieces for thy pains. When he comes back, thou shalt come to be of my household; and, as I trust

that he will be ever near me, thou mayest find many a way of serving him also. — Now, good soldier," he continued, turning to Gondrin, "you, too, have aided me well in a moment of great need: what recompense shall the Duke of Guise offer you? Will you take service with him, and he will care for your fortunes?"

"I thank you, my Lord," replied Gondrin, bluntly. "But on this young gentleman's lands was I born, his race have I served, his forest sports have I tended through all my life, and I think I will not leave him now, unless he dismount me out of his troop; and then, pardie! I think I shall follow him on foot. What I did for your Highness was done by his orders. I knew you but as Maître Henri, with a grey doublet and a cock's feather, so that I deserve neither thanks nor recompense, though I will gladly serve your Highness under him, if God and the good Count so will it."

"Would that there were many such as thou art!" said the Duke of Guise, thoughtfully. "There are few who will not quit old kindness

for new preferment. Here, my friend, take you that ring, in memory of Henry of Guise. It is a diamond, for which the goldsmiths will give five hundred crowns; but, should you ever want money, he who now gives it will gladly give a thousand crowns for it back again."

CHAP. XII.

The rock which it meets with in its course turns the impetuous river from the way it was pursuing, even when it comes down in all the fury of the mountain torrent. The slight slope of a green hill, the rise of a grassy bank at an after-period, bends the calm stream hither and thither through the plains, offering the most beautiful image of the effect of circumstances on the course of human life. Some streams also become coloured by the earth they pass over, or mingle readily with the waters that flow into theirs. But there are a few — and they are always the mightiest and most profound — which retain their original hue and character, receive the tribute of other streams, pass over rocks and mountains, and through the midst of deep lakes, without the Rhone losing its glossy blue in the bosom of Lake Leman, or the Rhine mingling

its clear stream with the waters of Constance or the current of the Maine.

The firm and powerful mind may be affected in its operations by circumstances, but not in its nature, and the depths of original character remain unchanged from the beginning to the end of life. Even strong feelings in such hearts, like objects cast upon a grand and rapid river, are borne along with the current through all scenes and circumstances, till with the waters themselves they plunge into the ocean of eternity.

Neither by nature nor by the period of his life was Charles of Montsoreau likely to retain and nourish long any light feelings of disappointment, but such was not the case with deep sorrows or with strong affections. His heart was of that firm and tenacious kind that it lost not readily any thing once strongly impressed upon it. The love of Marie de Clairvaut was one of those things never to be forgotten; the sorrows by which that love had been followed were never to be obliterated from his mind.

In the gay scenes of the sort of second court

which the Duke of Guise held for some days in the city of Rheims, Charles of Montsoreau mingled without any apparent grief weighing upon his mind, or any dark and gloomy memory seeming to oppress his spirit. He smiled with those who smiled, he admired all that was fine, and bright, and beautiful; and if he felt for a moment coming over him the deep melancholy with which he had quitted his own home, and which had now concentrated itself in his heart, he struggled against it and banished the outward appearance of it speedily, deriving only from those deeper feelings which lay concealed within, that degree of indifference towards the pleasures and amusements of youth which is seldom obtained but by experience. He forgot not Marie de Clairvaut, however—he forgot not the painful task which he had imposed upon himself; but he gladly occupied his immediate thoughts with the objects around him, and remained for some days well pleased himself, and not un-noted by others for his calm and graceful demeanour, amongst all

At length, however, [illegible]
two, whose wounds promised a tedio
lescence, were sufficiently recovered
him to pursue his journey to Logère
set out, with his train increased by si
veteran soldiers, whom the Duke spare
for the purpose of completing, as rapic
sible, the discipline and training of
retainers. As the distance was not fa
Duke of Guise had given him more
hint that no time was to be lost, he
accomplish the march in one day; a
off early in the morning, approach
towards sunset upon a short spring

It was a wild and wooded cou
borders of the ancient Ardenn
scene continually varying in mino
[illegible] the character of r

smooth and even, with the feet of the primeval oaks carpeted with green turf. Then, again, came deep dells, and banks, and ravines, and dingles, so thick that the boar could scarcely force his way through the bushes; and then the trees fell back, and left the wild stream wandering through green meadows, or sporting amongst the masses of stone. If a village appeared, it was perched high up above the road, as if afraid of the passing strangers; if a cottage, it was nested in the brown wood, and scarcely to be distinguished from the surrounding banks. The air was now as warm as May, and all the sweet things that haunt the first dream of summer had come forth: the birds were tuning their earliest songs; the flowers were gathering round the roots of the trees, and the branches above them were making an effort, though but faint, to cast away the brown cloak of winter, and put on the green garmenture of the spring.

The evening sunshine was clear and smiling. Pouring from under a light cloud, which covered a part of the sky, it streamed in amongst the bolls and branches of the trees; it gilded the green

upon the ground, the balminess of t
the spring sunshine, and the peaceful
Charles of Montsoreau felt his sorrows so
and though not less deeply melancholy
before, yet owned the influence of that
which is so near akin to youth and hop
rode on with a vague, but sweet feelin
brighter hours might come.

He had spent many a happy youthful
Logères; and though he had forgotten
so that the charm of novelty was not alto
wanting, he remembered enough to ma
heart beat with the thrill of memory
many an object, once familiar to his eye, r
as if to greet him on his return. At leng
road passing straight over a ridge of
ground, showed him his own little vill
the sweet valley below, with the château
on a tall hill that started up from the
the little town, unconnected with any
other heights around. The clouds that

the zenith at that moment were pouring forth a light shower of spring rain; the sun was shining bright near the edge of the horizon, catching on the weathercocks, and turrets, and windows of the château; while spanning over the castle and the village, and wavering on the face of the light grey cloud above was seen the radiant bow of heaven, the pledge of brightness for the days to come.

The young Count, as he paused for a moment to gaze, could hear gay distant voices, borne on the wind, rising up from the village in the valley. It was a cheerful sound; but, more than any thing else, it recalled the former times, and wove between them and the present a tissue of associations both sweet and melancholy. He thought of the gallant father, by whose knee he had played in those very scenes in other days; he thought of the mother, whose inheritance those lands had been; he thought of the mutual love and harmony that had subsisted between them all, and how death had taken two, and how disunion had arisen between the two that remained. He thought of

with her to the glad voices of the re
santry, and have pointed to the s
lit their dwelling, and the rainbow
across their sky, as auguries of hop
piness, and mutual love. He thc
this, and how it was all in vain: a
filled his eyes, as he rode on toward
ing before him.

The two servants, whom he had
day before, had spread the news, a
probable hour of his coming; the
village was thronged with people, i
day attire; the old grey cross, a
stone fountain, were decked with
light-hearted peasantry echoed his
shouts when he appeared, and g
gratulations poured forth upon h

calmed, and inspirited his heart; but the rejoicings of fellow-beings like himself—he knew not why, and he was angry to feel it—made him even more melancholy than before.

The elders of the village, conscious of dignity, the Count's own intendant, and the seneschal of his lands, came forward to greet him, and conduct him on his way, while Gondrin lingered behind, shaking hands with many an old friend, and inquiring after many an old acquaintance, vaunting the high deeds and noble qualities of his lord, and gladdening the hearts of the villagers with the promise of great doings at Logères.

Such was Charles of Montsoreau's arrival on his own estates; but the aspect of the interior of his dwelling again recalled bitter feelings and manifold regrets. But we must pass over such things, and merely notice briefly what followed after his arrival. Immediate inquiry showed him a state of things which few lords who absent themselves long from their own lands can ever hope to find:—his tenantry, his vassals, were in general contented and happy; no one

were many who had their little pe
sent, or their request to make for
there was none who found occasion
of the past. At the same time, h
considerable sums, and a consider
of produce, had accumulated for
that there were large woods, the t
required to be thinned; that the v
years yet remained to be sold; that
mines had poured unexpected we
coffers; and that, in fact, great riche
ed still greater to an inexperienced
mediately at his command.

The secret of all this was, tha
authority behind him were all
attached servants of his mother'
the feudal system had that advan

On speaking with the old seneschal in regard to the military capacity and disposition of the people, the old man smiled at the question if he could raise a hundred strong troopers within the ensuing month.

"The ringing, sir, of the old ban-cloque," he said, "which, thank God, I have heard but once in my day, would bring double the number of well-armed lads round your gate in an hour. They are only angry because, in all the feuds that have lately fallen out, I would never let them go to join either one party or another, if I could help it. Your own orders upon that head were strict; and I certainly thought it very wise, as long as they judged fit to leave us at peace here, to avoid all occasion of bringing feuds upon ourselves. Some of the young men stole away, indeed, whether I would or not, and took service with the good Duke of Guise against the reiters. They have almost all come back now; but the tales they bring of battles here and there, and driving the Germans out of France like sheep, are not likely

to make those that remained more fond of home."

"I have no wish," replied the Count, "to drain the place of its peasantry, good seneschal. A hundred men will be enough for my purpose, and of those, none but such as are willing. I would rather, of course, have those who have served already, if they are inclined to serve again under their own lord's banner. And now let this be arranged with all speed, for I have promised the Duke of Guise not to delay a day longer than necessary."

No delay or obstruction of any kind was met with by the young Count in his proceedings. Though neither very populous nor very productive, except in wood and pasture, his territories were very extensive; and no sooner were his wishes known, than many more volunteers flocked in to serve beneath his banner than he was willing to receive. With the old soldiers who accompanied him, and the aid of such of his peasantry as had served before, whatever was wanting to the discipline of the rest was soon accomplished. The providing

them with arms and horses occupied a somewhat longer time; but every thing was in active preparation, when, at the expiration of about a fortnight, a courier from the Duke of Guise arrived at Logères, bearing a letter dated from Soissons, and addressed to the young Count.

"I fear," the letter said, "that this will not find you in such a state of preparation as to enable you to join me at once, at the little town of Gonnesse, with all the men you promised. If you could, however, advance at once towards that place, with whatever men you can command at the moment, you might render the greatest of services to Henry of Guise.

"It would be as well," he continued in a postscript, "if you could cross the Aisne. My presence is required, with all speed, in the neighbourhood of Paris. I have not fifty men with me; and, notwithstanding the defeat of Auneau, I hear that a strong band of reiters has been seen in the neighbourhood of La Ferté sous Jouarre. If you can set off before night to-morrow, send me tidings that such is

The consultation of Charles of I with his seneschal was but short. knew that the field is the place to soldiers, and that but little more prep needful. He therefore caused his b before the courier of the duke, and ba that Prince what he saw, directing h that he would, on the following day, first march towards La Fertē with fifty that, in four days more, the rest wo if by any possibility their arms coul pared by that time. With this m mounted him afresh, and sent him Soissons.

increases them by contemplation. The first day's march was performed without danger or difficulty; and, not a little to the satisfaction of Charles of Montsoreau, the soldiers whom he had raised, being bred amongst a rural population, demeaned themselves peaceably and orderly amongst the inhabitants of the village where they halted for the night, so that no complaint was heard in the morning; and when they departed, many a villager was seen shaking hands with, and bidding God speed, the acquaintance of the evening before.

On the second day's march, which brought them to Grisolles, rumours and reports of the band of reiters which the Duke of Guise had mentioned began to reach their ears. The peasantry showed every sign of rejoicing on their appearance; and as they rode through the various villages, the young Count's horse was often surrounded by the peasantry, giving him this report or that, and expressing a hope that he had come to deliver them from the marauding strangers. On the third day's march towards Montigny, more accurate information

down towards the Marne, in the woo
hamlets about Gland and La Fern, in
ing the passengers on the roads l
Château Thierry, Epernay, and La Fer
lower part of which latter town they w
to have attacked and plundered. M
were the entreaties now addressed to
of Montsoreau by the wealthy farmers a
prietors of that rich tract of country t
once against the marauders, and dri
across the Marne. But he adhered f
his resolution of obeying the Duke's
and after halting for some hours to rel
horses and men at Gandelu, he agai
his march towards three o'clock in the
expecting to arrive at Montigny befor
fall.

horsemen, and who was constantly riding hither and thither through the country obtaining intelligence, and bringing it rapidly to the young Count. He had left the little village of Gandelu about a quarter of an hour before the rest of the troop, and was not seen again for nearly an hour and a half after it had recommenced its march. The Count had asked for him more than once, and had become somewhat apprehensive regarding him, when, as they were passing through the wood of Ampon, his anxiety regarding the boy was not diminished by hearing a discharge of fire-arms at some distance, but apparently in advance. He was relieved on Ignati's account, however, in a moment after, by seeing him coming at full speed through the wood in apparent excitement and alarm.

"Quick! quick, my Lord!" he cried: "down in the meadow there, the Schwartz reiters have attacked a gallant little band just crossing a small stream, and are driving them back towards the Marne. I saw some ladies in

a carriage, too; and they must have fallen by this time into the hands of the enemy.".

No further inducement was wanting to Charles of Montsoreau. Giving orders to quicken his men's pace, he himself advanced at still greater speed, till he reached the point where the road issued forth from the wood upon the meadow, where he had at once before him, at the distance of scarcely three hundred yards, the whole scene which the boy had described, though it was, of course, somewhat changed in aspect during the time which had since elapsed.

On the bank of the small stream which, flowing through a slight hollow in the meadow, proceeded towards the Marne, was seen a party of some thirty or forty horsemen, the greater part of them well armed, making a gallant but ineffectual stand against a body of reiters nearly double their number, which charged them on every side, and seemed likely to overpower them in a few minutes. That, however, which struck Charles of Montsoreau the most, was to see, in the very front of the party who opposed the reiters, a man dressed in a clerical

habit, who seemed, with the utmost coolness, skill, and determination, to be directing the movements of those around him, for the purpose of extricating a heavy carriage which was embarrassed in the bed of the rivulet.

The forms of the reiters passing here and there obscured the view of his person from time to time; but Charles of Montsoreau felt sure that his eyes could not deceive him, when they told him that there, in the midst of the fight, was the form of his old preceptor, the Abbé de Boisguerin. A moment after, he caught sight of his brother also, and prepared, without the loss of an instant, to extricate the whole party from their perilous situation.

The numbers which he brought were hardly sufficient to make his band, even when united with that of his brother, equal numerically to that of the reiters. But he knew that there was much in surprise; and, though he did not exactly despise his enemy, yet he by no means looked upon each reiter as a match for one of his own men at arms. His troopers had followed him at all speed; and,

every horse's sides,
they went, against the flank of the en
a speed and determination that prove
moment quite irresistible. The com
the foreigners had scarcely time to wh
of his force to receive the charge of
adversary, before the troops of Log
upon him, and, in a moment, he w
down the stream for nearly fifty yard

But the marauders had one great
over ordinary troops. Accustomed t
small parties, and even hand to hand,
fully as much, if not more, in the
when their ranks were broken than
were in a compact mass, and Charles
soreau now found that the success
onset by no means dispirited them
superior in numbers to his own sol

rassed in protecting the unarmed persons of their own party, thought it needful to give him the slightest assistance in his contention with the reiters.

Under these circumstances, the only thing that appeared to be left for him to do, was to keep his men in the most perfect order, and fall gradually back, covering his brother's band, and sending to demand his co-operation for their mutual benefit. The reiters, however, in the mean time, made every effort to frustrate this purpose, which they at once divined, and by repeated charges endeavoured to break his line, and force him to fight after their own manner. In pursuing this plan, however, they committed the oversight of making a part of their body cross the stream in order to take him on the flank.

With a quickness of perception, which he generally displayed in times of difficulty and danger, he had remarked, even while in the act of charging the enemy, that the stream higher up grew deeper, and the banks more steep. He now saw that, by falling back a

by hand.

To do so, however, obliged him to
brother's party, the carriage, and those
knew it contained, to struggle unassisted
little force which had been detached f
reiters, as well as they might, and for a
he remained in a state of suspense whic
lost him the advantage. The hour, how
late; the shades of evening were begi
fall: one look to the other side of the fiel
him that the first attack of the reite
brother's party had been repulsed, a
with considerable loss, and he accordi
his resolution, and gave orders to retr
up the stream, preparing his men, h
charge again the moment that he fo
nedient so to do.

the others immediately in front of him were surprised, and somewhat astounded, to find that as soon as he perceived the stream was deep enough, and the bank was high enough—if not to prevent the other body of reiters from crossing, at all events to embarrass and to delay them —the order was given to the French troopers to charge, and the young Count and his band came down upon them with a shock which scattered them before him in an instant.

He was now, in turn, superior to that party in numbers, and knowing that not a moment was to be lost, he exerted every energy of mind and body. With his own hand he struck the commander from his horse, and urging on his men with all speed, drove a number of the scattered parties over the banks into the stream. Some escaped unhurt to the other side, but in many instances the horses fell, and rolled over into the water with their riders; and in the mean time terrible havoc was going on amongst those who remained upon the bank.

The pistols and musketoons of the German soldiery had been discharged in the first

contest with his brother; but the troops of Logères, charging with the lance, had still their fire-arms loaded: and seeing that the struggle with the sword might be protracted till the other party came up, the young commander shouted loudly to his men to use their fire-arms. His voice was heard even in the midst of the strife; and now mingled as the two parties were with each other, the effect of the pistol was terrible. A number of the enemy were killed and thrown from their horses on the spot, a number were wounded, and unable to continue the conflict, and the rest, seized with panic, were flying amain, when the other band, seeing the error that had been committed, endeavoured to repair it by crossing the stream and attacking Charles of Montsoreau in the rear.

Though they succeeded in their first object, it was with difficulty and in disorder, some choosing one place, some, not liking to venture too far, seeking a safer passage; and heavily armed as were both horses and men, the task was certainly one of great danger. In the midst of the strife which he was carrying on, the young

Count had not failed to watch eagerly, from time to time, the movements of the party on the other bank.

The body immediately opposed to him was by this time completely routed, and in full flight; and wheeling his men to encounter the other, he calmly brought them once more into good order, and led them to the charge.

But the leader of the enemy in that part of the field seeing that he had come too late, and that his men were in no condition to protract the struggle with success, was wise enough not to attempt to play out a losing game. Giving orders for instant retreat, he kept a firm face to his adversary, till his men had recovered from the disorder of crossing the water, and then marched firmly up the hill, facing round every two or three minutes to receive the charge of the French troopers, and not suffering his pace to be hurried, though he lost several men as he went.

The sight, however, of a group of peasantry, watching the strife from a part of the road above, seemed to strike the reiters, who probably mistook them for a fresh band

diers, with panic and dismay. Their
r lost all command over them; and
ugh he was seen in vain endeavouring to
ly them, and keep them in their ranks, they
d down the road at full speed, pursued by
harles of Montsoreau and his band for some
time, till the coming on of night rendered it
useless to protract the chase any farther.

The young officer then caused the recall to be sounded, and turned his bridle rein towards the field where the skirmish had taken place, in order both to ascertain what was the amount of his own loss, and to give assistance to the wounded. He found a number of peasants on the field: and though in all instances they were giving the tenderest care and attention to the wounded troopers of Logères, there was too good reason to suspect that the knife of the boor had been employed without mercy to end the course of any of the wounded Germans who had fallen into their hands. Only two were found alive upon the field, and it is probable that they owed their lives to the return of Charles of Montsoreau.

His own loss in persons actually killed was very slight, but a number were severely wounded; and in order to gain some assistance for these poor men, it was necessary, of course, to proceed to the nearest town. On inquiring what that was, the peasantry replied that none was nearer than La Ferté sous Jouarre, and thither the young Count bent his steps, as soon as some litters and carriages could be procured to bear the wounded men.

CHAP. XIII.

Night had fallen heavily over the w
Charles of Montsoreau and his party ap
the town of La Ferté: but the moon wa
out heavily from behind the clouds, a
silvery radiance over all that part of
which lay behind the heights of Jouarr
ing out a part of the towers and pir
the old abbey in clear relief, as they r
the shoulder of the hill.

But there were other lights in th
of a different hue, which not a littl
Charles of Montsoreau, as he rode on a
of his men. What seemed to be torch
red and heavy glare they gave,

He turned suddenly from the path, however, and plunged his horse down the banks into the neighbouring meadow, as soon as he saw the body of men at arms; but though the young Count judged it useless to pursue him, the faint light that was in the sky was quite sufficient to enable him to judge that he belonged to a part of the marauding band which had been defeated in the morning. He concluded, naturally and rightly, that he was one of those who had followed the party of his brother Gaspar, and had probably pursued it towards Jouarre. A moment or two after, the sound of coming horses again met his ear; and, ordering some of his men to advance, and cut off the way into the meadow, he halted the rest of the troop, and waited in listening expectation.

At the end of a few minutes, three more horsemen appeared, and dashed into the very midst of the ambush that the young Count had laid for them.

"Halt, and surrender!" he cried in a loud tone, ordering his men at the same time to close

round them; and the reiters, for such indeed they were, finding escape impossible, yielded without resistance. From them Charles of Montsoreau found that his suspicions were true, and that they formed part of the band which had pursued his brother towards La Ferté. He could gain no further information, however, from the men he had taken, except that the Marquis had effected his retreat in safety, and that a large body of armed burghers, coming out from La Ferté, had forced the reiters to fly with all speed.

Having given the prisoners in charge to those who would not lose sight of them, Charles of Montsoreau resumed his march; and, as his band approached La Ferté, their trumpet sang cheerily out in the clear night, giving notice to the citizens of the arrival of a friendly party.

The streets were now full of horses and people, the red light of the torches flashing upon the eager and excited countenances of those who had taken part in the affray; and, by the glare, Charles of Montsoreau easily distinguished the chief inn, with a number of

horses held around the door, and a group of fifteen or sixteen persons gathered together round one, in whom he at once recognised his brother.

Perhaps Charles of Montsoreau had not any cause to be more satisfied with that brother's conduct during the eventful day which had just passed, than he had been with that which preceded his departure from Montsoreau. But fraternal affection was strong at his heart, and halting his men in the market-place, he rode up with the page and two or three others to gratulate his brother, and ask how he fared after the perils he had undergone. He was surprised, however, as he came near, to see a heavy cloud lowering on the Marquis's brow, and his eyes rolling with an expression both fierce and anxious.

"So, Charles of Montsoreau," he exclaimed in a loud harsh tone, even before his brother could dismount, "so you have come to render an account of your conduct this day, I trust, and to explain away the treachery which is but too evident."

The young Count heard him with surprise,

he walked up to his brother through
holding out his hand, and saying,
you are under some mistake. How d
You shall explain to me what is
within."

But the Marquis put his hand
exclaiming, "I take no hand stained
treachery, even though it be my br
care not who sees or who hears. I s
you have brought the Lady with
you have contrived to rescue once m
leading her into danger, that you
deliver her from it."

"I can hardly suppose you sane,
Montsoreau," replied his brother
"What danger have I led you or a
into? though you say true, when y

"Pshaw!" exclaimed his brother, turning away with a look of contempt, which was very hard to bear. "You had better bring the Lady into the house, sir, and let her take some repose; and if she be not altogether blinded, I will take care to explain to her how all this day's brilliant achievements have been brought about."

"In the name of God, Gaspar of Montsoreau!" exclaimed his brother, at length, "what is it that you mean? What Lady? Where is Mademoiselle de Clairvaut? What madness has seized upon you now?"

Gaspar of Montsoreau took a step forward, till he almost touched his brother, and demanded in a voice that was loud, but that trembled with passion, "Did I not see your page, that very page who is holding your horse now—that very page, who was pointed out to me by one that knows him well, as your bought bondsman—did I not see him—can you deny it?—did I not see him with the reiters at the moment that they charged down the hill upon us? And then I saw him by your side five minutes after, when you came pretending to assist us."

sir, he is my brother!"

"I am sorry that he is, sir," replied
"He might see me near the reiters
never saw me with them, for I had be
ing them for half an hour, concealed
great mass of bushes, and not daring
my very life, till I saw them begin to
the hill, when I came out and gallop
as I could to tell my noble Lord, and
up to attack them. — Out upon it! —
ing to help any one, when there is
man in the troop unwounded! — Ou
— Pretending to attack the reiters
has well nigh cut them to pieces, ar
two men together of the whole band!

The boy spoke loud and indignan
the joyful news of the marauders

"For Heaven's sake, Gaspar," said Charles of Montsoreau, "govern your feelings for a few minutes. I am here on the service of the noble Duke of Guise, and set out from Logères only three days ago. I had heard of the reiters by the way, and determined to fight them if I met them. The first moment that I saw or had any communication with them — on my honour and on my soul!—was that when I ordered my men to level their lances, and charge them in the flank. You have nothing to do but either to look at the banks of the stream, where they lay by dozens, to speak to the prisoners I have brought in, or to take one glance into those litters and those carts that carry my own wounded, to show you that it was no feigned strife, as you have wildly fancied, that went on between us. And now believing this, and feeling that you have done me wrong, tell me where is Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, for your words alarm and agitate me concerning her? Where is she, Gaspar? I say where is she?"

"I know not," said the Marquis, turning sullenly away, "I know not, Charles. In the

and I have seen no ...
however, was with her, and he has
up either; two or three of the men
there."

"Bring up the prisoners," exclaim
of Montsoreau, with a degree of agor
that it is impossible to conceive. "
can give us information, for we took t
road just now. — Bring up those pri

With their arms tied, and their
covered, the three Germans, who
voured, as was customary with ma
bands, to make themselves look a
terrible as possible, by suffering th
beards to grow in confused and tan
were now brought before the young
and gazing sternly upon them, he
are here not as fair and open ene

taining any portion of mercy is, by answering the questions I am going to ask you distinctly and truly; for if I catch the slightest wavering or falsehood in your replies, I will have you shot one by one within the next five minutes, as a just punishment for the crimes that you have committed."

His words seemed to make little or no impression upon men accustomed to the daily contemplation of death. They all seemed to understand him, however, though it was with difficulty that they answered him in his own language, mingling German with French, so as to render it nearly unintelligible.

"We will tell you the truth to be sure," replied one of the men. "What should we tell you a lie for? All that ought to be lied about you know already; so we can do no harm by telling you the truth, and may do our own throats harm by telling you a lie. Hundred thousand! Ask your questions, and you shall have truth."

It was in vain, however, that Charles of Montsoreau questioned the man sternly and strictly

mitted that they had driven the pa
Marquis beyond the carriage, and had
themselves in the eagerness of pursuit
sudden appearance of the armed bı
La Ferté had caused them, he said,
in great haste, and in separate parties.
those who were with him had not
same road by which they came, and
nothing of the carriage.

This information, though so scanty
Charles of Montsoreau a hope. "If
he exclaimed eagerly, "on which
were captured, is not the same on
carriage was left, it may still be
Mademoiselle de Clairvaut safe."

But his brother shook his head wit
sullen grief and despair. "No!'

ing that you were bringing in your prize in triumph."

"You have learnt, Gaspar," said his brother, "I know not why or how, to do me sad injustice. However, it is the duty of both of us not to close an eye till we have discovered what has become of the young Lady whom you undertook to conduct in safety till she was under the protection of her relations."

"I see not how it is your duty, Charles," replied his brother, sharply. "I, as you say, undertook to conduct her, and therefore it is my duty; but you, it seems to me, have nothing to do with it."

"It is my duty, Gaspar," replied his brother, "as a gentleman, and as a man of honour; and it is also my duty as an attached friend of the Duke of Guise; so that I shall seek for her this very instant. Let us both to horse again; let us obtain guides who know the country well. You take one circuit, I will take another; and as there is now no farther fear of any attack from the reiters, we can suffer the greater part of our men to repose, and meeting here in the

tinued, " let us, I beseech you, let
in a brotherly spirit: do justice t
and intentions, for they have be
kind and brotherly towards yours

" Doubtless," said the Marq
soreau, with one of those bitter
the determination of persisting
often supplies to the uncandid an
" doubtless your motives and i
good and brotherly, when the
you did after learning from the
guerin my feelings, wishes, a
instantly to seek the Duke of
purpose of prepossessing him i
and against my suit."

" In this, as in all else, you
Gaspar," replied his brother;

Surgeons be obtained immediately to dress the wounds of the hurt, and tell Alain and Mortier to provide for the comfort and refreshment of the rest, according to the orders I gave them as we came along. Take this German with us, as a sure guide to show us the spot where the carriage was last seen. If I might advise you, Gaspar, you will go round under Jouarre, and stretch out till you reach Montreuil. The carriage cannot have passed the Marne except by this bridge, so that ——"

"I shall follow my own plan, Charles of Montsoreau," said the Marquis sullenly; "I want not an instructor as well as a rival in my younger brother." And thus saying, he turned away to give his own orders to some of those who surrounded him.

In the mean time his brother remounted his horse in haste; and, followed by Gondrin, and the ten men who had been selected, he set out upon his search. That search, however, proved utterly vain. No tidings whatsoever of Marie de Clairvaut, or those who accompanied her, were to be obtained; the peasantry, in terror of

open a communication, as every door applied to was shut, and in general r sullen silence was returned to his app admittance or information. In the fe where the sound of his voice, speak French tongue, obtained for him a the reply was still the same, that the all closed, from fear of the reiter neither seen nor heard of any one p nightfall.

With horses and men wearied and by their fruitless search, and with hi aching, and his heart sad and anxio of Montsoreau returned towards d the town of La Ferté. His brother had arrived some time before him, a tired to rest without waiting for his a

cerning it; and, unbuckling his arms, without, however, casting off the dress he wore beneath, he cast himself down to rest in the apartment which had been prepared for him.

Though much fatigued, however, and with a mind and body both exhausted by all the events and anxieties of the day, sleep refused to visit his eyelids. His busy thoughts turned to every painful theme that memory could supply from the past, or despondency call up out of the future; and finding that it was in vain to seek repose at that moment, he approached the deep casement, threw open the window, and gazed out into the market-square, which lay directly beneath his apartments.

The morning was advancing brightly; the spring sunshine sparkling down the principal street, through an opening in which the Marne was seen flowing gaily on, with the open country rising up behind. The little market-cross was surrounded by the carts and litters in which he had brought in the wounded men, and some of the early townsmen were already seen walking hither and thither, while

bearing the whole of their little st
basket on their shoulders or their arı
of them paused to consider and to
upon the array of vehicles round t
talking in a low voice, as if fearful of
the stillness of the morning hour.
was calm, and quiet, and soothing; a
tranquilised after gazing at it for som
the young Count again turned to his
wooed the blessing of slumber not nc
He slept profoundly, and might l
on for many hours, had he not been
about nine o'clock by the page Ign
him by the arm.

"What is the matter, Ignati?"
starting up. "You seem in haste and

"Your brother is on horseback,

young Count eagerly. "Quick boy, do not keep me in suspense."

"See your brother, and he will tell you," said the boy. "If he does not, I will. But, quick, or he will be away; run down at once, even as you are."

Charles of Montsoreau hastened towards the door, dressed as he was in the buff coat which he wore beneath his armour; and from the stairs heard sounds that hastened all his movements. There was the trampling of horses, and the noise of many tongues in the court-yard, but above all the voice of his brother, ordering his men as if for instant departure.

When he reached the foot of the staircase, which led into the great court of the inn, he found that those sounds had not deceived him. Gaspar de Montsoreau was on horseback, with his men drawn up in line ready to depart; and a cart containing two or three wounded men, and all the baggage which had not fallen into the hands of the reiters, was in the act of issuing forth through the archway into the market-

There was an air of eager and somewhat

scornful triumph on the face of the Marquis de Montsoreau; and, at the very moment of the young Count's appearance, he was turning to speak with a well-dressed cavalier by his side, whom his brother had never before beheld.

As soon as the eyes of the two brothers met, the Marquis exclaimed aloud, in a scoffing tone, addressing his new companion, "Ha, Monsieur de Colombel! By Heaven here comes my good young brother of Logères! We must put spurs to our horses and ride quick, for he has taken service, it seems, with the Duke of Guise — commands a band of stout men-at-arms, enough to overpower us here — and may think fit to arrest us on the spot, if he finds that we are not of the same party as himself. He is not one to be stopped by brotherly love or consideration, I can assure you."

"Nay!" replied the cavalier whom he addressed, speaking with a courtly but significant smile, "the Duke of Guise is King Henry's dear friend and faithful cousin, and professes every sort of reverence for the crown of France."

The whole of this was spoken, as Charles of

Montsoreau advanced towards them, with an evident intention that he should hear it; but he took not the slightest notice, and walking up calmly to the side of his brother's horse, he said, "This is not kind of you, Gaspar, to quit the place thus early, without giving me an opportunity of explaining to you things which you have misinterpreted and taken amiss."

"As you said to me last night, Charles," replied his brother, "I have not time for long explanations now; every minute is precious and invaluable. You can write to me if you have any thing to explain."

"You will inform me at least then," said his brother, "whether you have obtained any news of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and where she is."

"I am in haste! I am in haste, good brother!" replied the Marquis, "and can only wait to tell you that she is in safe hands and well, which must be enough to satisfy you."

"Not quite," answered Charles of Montsoreau. "As I am now upon my way to meet the Duke of Guise, and shall most likely reach him before you do, it will be but courteous of you to send

m some fuller information regarding a Lady
o nearly connected with himself."

"If you do not reach him before I do," replied his brother with a grim smile, "you and he will be long parted from each other, my good brother; and as to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, she is in safe hands, and will be well taken care of. Fare you well, my brother. Now march, my men!" And without waiting for any other reply, he shook his bridle and rode out of the court.

The patience of Charles of Montsoreau was nearly at an end, and he paused, gazing upon the ground for a minute or two, before he could overcome the pain and indignation that he felt. He then turned to his own chamber again, beckoning to the boy Ignati, who was still upon the stairs, to follow him thither.

"Now, Ignati," he said, "What is the meaning of all this? You have probably heard all that has passed. Give me what information you can, without loss of time."

"This is all that I know," replied the boy; "but it is enough. Mademoiselle de Clair-

vaut, the Lady whom you were asking about last night, has met with a party of the King's troops which had been sent against the reiters, and has by them been carried to Château Thiery, whence she sent that cavalier whom you saw with your brother, to tell him what had become of her. All those facts I heard the cavalier himself relate: but from the page he brought with him, who was in the room, or at least at the door, when his master and the Marquis were speaking, I gathered, that this Monsieur de Colombel — by the advice of some priest who accompanied Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, I know not whom — has persuaded your brother to join the party of the King, telling him that Henry would certainly hold Mademoiselle de Clairvaut as a hostage for the Duke's good conduct, and would most likely bestow her upon any one he thought fit."

Charles of Montsoreau pressed his hand firmly upon his brow for two or three minutes. He had been learning for some time those dark and painful lessons of human nature which come so bitterly to a noble and a generous heart, when first the world, the contentions of self-interest,

and the strife of passion, teaches us how few, how very few, there are who have any thought or motive in all their actions but the mean ungenerous ones of self — those bitter lessons which fix upon mature life the sad, the dark, the horrible companionship of doubt and suspicion.

"Can I," he muttered, speaking to himself, "can I have been mistaken in the Abbé de Boisguerin? Can I have trusted, and believed, and reverenced, where neither trust, nor belief, nor reverence was due? — It cannot be! No, it cannot be!" And after thinking again over all that the page had said, he added aloud, "The King's troops at Château Thiery! — The Duke at Gonesse! — We must lose no time, but get to Montigny as speedily as possible."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

VOL. II.

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HENRY OF GUISE:

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL,"

ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

All was bustle round the door of the little inn of Montigny; twenty or thirty horses employed the hands and attention of as many grooms and stable-boys; and while they put their heads together, and talked over the perfections or imperfections of the beasts they held, sixty or seventy respectable citizens, the great cloth merchant, and the wholesale dealer in mill-stones, the curé of the little town, the bailiff of the high-justiciary, the ironmonger, the grocer, and the butcher, stood in knots on the out-side, discussing more important particulars

than the appearance of the horses. The sign of the inn was the *Croix de Lorraine*, and the name of the Duke of Guise was frequently heard mingling in the conversation of the people round the door.

"A great pity," cries one, "that his Highness does not stay here the night."

"Some say that the King's troops are pursuing him," replied another.

"Sure enough he came at full speed," said a third; "but I heard his people talk about the reiters."

"Oh, we would protect him against the reiters," cried one of the bold citizens of Montigny.

"Well," said another, "if he be likely to bring the reiters upon us, I think his Highness very wise to go. How could we defend an open town? and he has not twenty men behind him."

"I will tell you something, my masters," said another, with an air of importance, and a low bow: —"When my boy was over towards Montreuil to-night, he heard a report of the reiters having been defeated near Gandelu."

"Oh, nonsense!" replied the courageous burgher; "who should defeat them if the Duke was not there?"

"But hark!" cried another, "I hear trumpets, as I live. Now, if these should be the King's troops we will defend the Duke at the peril of our lives. But let us look out and see."

"Come up to my windows," cried one.

"Go up the tower of the church," said the curé.

But another remarked that the sounds did not come from the side of Paris; and, in a minute or two after, a well-dressed citizen like themselves rode gaily in amongst them, jumped from his horse, threw up his cap in the air, and exclaimed, "Long life to the Duke of Guise! The reiters have been cut to pieces!"

"What is that you say, young man?" exclaimed a voice from one of the windows of the inn above; and looking up, the citizen saw a young and gay-looking man sitting in the open casement, and leaning out with his arm round the iron bar that ran up the centre.

"I said, my Lord," replied the man, "that the reiters have been cut to pieces, and I saw the troops that defeated them bring in the wounded and prisoners last night into La Ferté."

"Ventre bleu! This is news indeed," cried the other; and instantly turning, he quitted the window and advanced into the room.

While this conversation had been going on without, a quick conference had been going on between the personages whose horses were held without. The chamber in which they were assembled was an upstairs' room, with two beds in two several corners, and a table in the midst covered with a clean white table-cloth, and ornamented in the centre with a mustard-pot, a salt-seller, and a small bottle of vinegar, while four or five spoons were ranged around.

At the side of the table appeared the Duke of Guise, dining with as good an appetite off a large piece of unsalted boiled beef, as off any of the fine stews and salmis of his cook Maître Lanecque. Five or six other gentlemen were around, diligently employed in the same occu-

pation; and one who had finished two bowls of soup at a place where they had previously stopped, now declaring that he had no appetite, had taken his seat in the window. The servants of the Duke and of his companions were at dinner below, and the landlord himself was excluded from the room, that dining and consultation might go on at the same time.

"It is most unfortunate," said the Duke of Guise, as soon as he had seated himself at the table, "it is most unfortunate that this youth has not kept his word with me. Our horses and men are both fatigued to death; and yet, after what happened the other day at Mareuil, it would be madness to remain here all night with only twenty horsemen."

"You have got timid, fair cousin," replied one of the gentlemen present. "We shall have you wrapping yourself up in a velvet gown, and setting up a conférrie, in imitation of our excellent, noble, and manly king."

The Duke was habitually rash enough to be justified in laughing at the charge, and he replied, "It is on your account, my pretty

cousin, that I fear the most. You know what the reiters have sworn to do with you, if they catch you."

"It is most unfortunate indeed," said an older and a graver man; "most unfortunate, that this Count de Logères should have deceived you. It might have been better, perhaps, to trust to some more tried and experienced friend."

"Oh, you do him wrong, Laval; you do him wrong," replied the Duke. "It is neither want of faith or good will, I can be sworn. Some accident, such as may happen to any of us, has detained him. I am very anxious about him, and somewhat reproach myself for having made him march with only half his numbers. Had his whole band been with him, he might have made head against the reiters, if he met with them. But now he has less than half their reputed number. Nevertheless," he continued, "his absence is, as you say, most unfortunate; for — with these Germans on our left, and the movements of Henry's Swiss upon our right — they might catch us as the

Gascons do wild ducks, in the net, through the meshes of which we have been foolish enough to thrust our own heads. I pray thee, Brissac, go down to mine host of the house, and gather together some of the notable men of the place, to see if we cannot by any means purchase horses to carry us on. Who are you speaking to, Aumale?" he continued, raising his voice, and addressing the youth who sat in the window.

"Good news, good news!" cried the young man springing down, and coming forward into the room. "The reiters have been cut to pieces near Gandelu. There is a fellow below who has seen the victorious troops, and the wounded and the prisoners."

"My young falcon for a thousand crowns!" cried the Duke of Guise. "If that be the case, we shall soon hear more of him. Hark! are not those trumpets? Yet go out, Brissac; go out. We must not suffer ourselves to be surprised whatever we do. Aumale, have the horses ready. If they should prove the Swiss, we must march out at the one gate while they march in at the other."

But at that moment Brissac, who had run down at a word, and was by this time in the street, held up his hand to one of the others who was looking out of the window, exclaiming, "Crosses of Lorraine, crosses of Lorraine! A gallant body of some fifty spears; but all crosses of Lorraine.—Ay, and I can see the arms of Montsoreau and Logères! All is right, tell the Duke; all is right!" And thus saying he advanced along the street to meet the troops that were approaching.

The Duke of Guise, who had risen from the table, seated himself again quietly, drew a deep breath as a man relieved from some embarrassment, and filling the glass that stood beside him, half full of the good small wine of Beaugency, rested his head upon his hand, and remained in thought for several minutes.

While he remained in this meditative mood the sounds of the trumpets became louder and louder; the trampling of horses' feet were heard before the inn, and then was given, in a loud tone, the order to halt. Several of the companions of the Duke had gone

down stairs to witness the arrival of the troops, and in a minute or two after, feet were heard coming up, and the Duke turned his head to welcome the young Count on his arrival. He was somewhat surprised, however, to see an old white-headed man, who had doffed his steel cap to enter the Duke's presence, come in between Brissac and Laval, and make him a low inclination of the head.

"Who are you, my good friend?" demanded the Duke. "And where is the young Count of Logères?"

"I know not, your Highness," replied the other. "I am the Count's seneschal, and expected to find him here. He set off four days ago with one half of his men, commanding me to join him at Montigny with the rest, as soon as their arms arrived from Rhetel. They came sooner than we expected, so I followed him the day after."

"Then is it to you, my worthy old friend," said the Duke, "that the country is obliged for the defeat of this band of marauders?"

"No, your Highness," replied the old man,

bluntly. "I have not had the good fortune to meet with any thing to defeat, though, indeed, we heard of something of the kind this morning as we passed by Grisolles."

"I hope the news is true," said the Duke; "I have heard of many a victory in my day, where it turned out that the victors were vanquished; and I hear that these reiters numbered from a hundred to a hundred and fifty men. How many had your Lord with him, good seneschal?"

"He had fifty-one men at arms," replied the old soldier, "besides some lackeys and a page; and some men leading horses with the baggage he could not do without."

"I shall not be easy till I hear more of him," said the Duke, walking up and down the room. "However, your coming, good seneschal, will enable us to make good this place against any force that may be brought against it. Quick, send me up the aubergiste. We must despatch some one to bring us in intelligence: and now, good seneschal, rest and refresh your horses, get your men some food, and

have every thing ready to put foot in stirrup again at a moment's notice; for if we find that your Lord has fallen into the hands of these reiters, we must mount to deliver him. Let their numbers be what they may, Henry of Guise cannot make up his mind to leave a noble friend in the hands of the foemen."

"We are all ready this minute, my Lord," replied the old seneschal. "There is not a man of Logères who is not ready to ride forty miles, and fight two reiters this very night in defence of his Lord."

"The old cock 's not behind the young one," said the Chevalier d'Aumale to Brissac. But the Duke of Guise overruled the zealous eagerness of the old soldier; and as soon as the aubergiste appeared, directed him to send off a boy in the direction of Montreuil and La Ferté, in order to gain intelligence of the movements of the Count de Logères, and to ascertain whether the report of the defeat of the reiters was correct or not. His own horses he ordered now to be unsaddled, and casting off his corselet, gave himself up to repose for the evening.

place between the Count of Logeres
reiters on the preceding evening. All
stories were told: every peasant that br
a basket of apples had his own version
affair; and the accounts were the most o
as well as the most various. The D
Guise, however, was too much accusto
sifting the various rumours of the day, n
able to glean some true information f
midst of these conflicting statements. I
clear to him that the reiters had been
and without having any very certain cau
belief, he felt convinced that Charles
soreau was already upon his way towar
tigny.

"Come," he added, after expres
opinions to the Chevalier d'Aumale, "w

not procure something for supper more dainty than he gave us for dinner."

"The poor man was taken by surprise," replied Brissac; "but since he heard that you were to remain here, there has been such a cackling and screaming in the court-yard, and such a riot in the dovecote, that I doubt not all the luxuries of Montigny will be poured forth this night upon the table."

In less than an hour after this order was given, the arrival of fresh horses was heard; and Laval, who went to the window, announced, that as well as he could see through the increasing darkness, for it was now night, this new party consisted only of five or six persons. In a few minutes, however, the door was thrown open by the aubergiste, and Charles of Montsoreau himself appeared, dusty with the march, and with but few traces of triumph or satisfaction on his countenance.

"What, my young hero!" cried the Duke, rising and taking him by the hand; "you look as gloomy as if you had suffered a defeat, rather than gained a victory. Are the tidings which

we have heard not true then, or are they exaggerated? If you have even brought off your forces safe from the reiters, that is a great thing, so overmatched as you were."

"It is not that, your Highness," replied Charles of Montsoreau: "the numbers were not very disproportionate, but the reiters have certainly suffered a complete rout, and I do not think that they will ever meet in a body again. They lost a good many men on the field, and I fear the peasantry have murdered all the wounded."

"So much the better," cried the Chevalier d'Aumale; "so much the better. One could have done nothing with them but hang them."

"I fear then," said the Duke of Guise, addressing the Count, "I fear then that your own loss has been severe by the gloominess of your countenance, Logères."

"There are a good many severely wounded, sir," replied the Count; "but very few killed. This, however, is not the cause of my vexation, which I must explain to your Highness alone. I have, however, to apologise to you

for not being here last night, as I fully intended. I did not go to seek the reiters, but fell in with them accidentally, and after the skirmish I was forced to turn towards La Ferté instead of coming here, in order to get surgeons to my wounded men. I find, however, sir," he continued, "that my good old seneschal has made more speed than his master, and has arrived here with his band before me. I must go and take order for the comfort of my people, and prepare lodging for the rest who are coming up, for I rode on at all speed as soon as I met with the messenger whom you had sent out to seek me. After that I will return and crave a few minutes' audience of your Grace alone."

"Come back to supper, dear friend," replied the Duke; "we must let our gay friends now sup with us; but then we will drive them to their beds, and hold solitary council together, and be not long Logères, for you need both refreshment and repose."

When the young Count returned to the apartments of the Duke, after he had seen the rest of his troop arrive, and had taken every measure

with the page Ignati, while his own office gathered together in the window on th side.

The Duke instantly took him by th as he approached, and said in a low but tone, "You see I have been questioni spy I set upon you, Logères, and he has into a number of your secrets; but yc not be angry with him on that accor Henry of Guise will not abuse the trust. let us sit down to table, and we will aft find an opportunity of talking over a affairs. You have acted nobly and galla young friend, and have served your while you benefited me. For your conduct you are not responsible: but this morning's events, if the boy sp

"Hush! hush!" cried the Duke. "There is nothing sits so ill upon the lips of a noble-hearted man as an excuse for bad actions, either in himself or others. It is false generosity, Charles of Montsoreau, to say the least of it. But let us to table. Come, Aumale. See! our good Aubergiste looks reproachfully at you for letting his fragrant ragouts grow cold. Come, we will to meat, gentlemen. Sit down, sit down. We will have no ceremony here at the Cross of Lorraine."

Thus saying, the Duke seated himself at table, and the rest took their places around. The supper proved better than had been expected, and wine and good appetites supplied the place of all deficiencies. The Chevalier d'Aumale indeed had every now and then a light jest at some of the various dishes: he declared that a certain capon had blunted his dagger, and asked Charles of Montsoreau whether it was not tougher than a veteran reiter. He declared that a matelote d'anguille which was placed before him, had a strong flavour of a hedge; but added, that as

without a protest.

[illegible] but though he addressed the part of these gifts to the young C Logères, he could hardly wring a sm one who in former days would have with the best, but whose heart w anxiously occupied with many a bitter

Charles of Montsoreau was eag that the meal should be over, for h for that private communication with which weighed upon his mind in tion. He felt that it would be d exculpate his brother; and yet, ance of his own high resolutions, to do so: and then again he eag that the powerful prince beside w would find some means of deliv de Clairvaut from the hands

lessly to him; and it was not very much enlivened by a little incident which happened towards the close of supper, when the landlord, who had come into the room followed by a man dressed in the garb of a surgeon, whispered something in the Duke's ear which called his attention immediately.

"How many did you say?" demanded the Duke.

"Only two at present, your Highness," replied the surgeon; "but three more sinking, I think."

"All in the same house?" said the Duke.

"No, my Lord, in different houses," replied the man; "but near the same spot."

"The only thing to be done," replied the Duke, "is to draw a barrier across the end of that street, and mark the houses with a white cross."

"What is the matter, your Highness?" said Laval, from the other end of the table.

"Oh, nothing," replied the Duke of Guise, "only a few cases of the plague; and because

The Duke of Guise conti...
as lightly and gaily as if nothing had happ
for his mind had become so accustom
deal with and to contemplate things of
moment, that they made not that impre
upon him which they do upon those w
course is laid in a smoother and evener pa

Charles of Montsoreau, however, could
feel in the same way. "War and pestilen
he thought, "bloodshed and death! The
the common every-day ideas of men i
unhappy country, now. Perhaps famin
be added some day soon, and yet there
light laughter, and merriment, and jest.
let it be so. Why should we cast awa
ment because it can but be small? Life
but made up of chequered visions: let
... while we may and

Shortly after, both rose; and, with an air of affected unwillingness, the Chevalier d'Aumale followed their example. The two or three other gentlemen who had partaken of the meal, but who either from inferior situation or natural taciturnity had mingled but little in the conversation, left the table at the same time, and accompanied the others out of the room, so that the Duke of Guise and the young Count were left alone.

CHAP. II.

THE weak-minded and the vulgar are by the aspect of high station; the hun mind, and the moderate in talent, are su by high genius, and bend lowly to the r of mind; the powerful, the firm, and the el spring up to meet their like, and witl there is nothing earthly that can overa a consciousness of evil in themselves sensation of abasement for those they lo

Such was the case with Charles of Mont who undoubtedly was a man of hig powerful mind. He was in his first you true; he had no great or intimate kn of the world, except that knowledge world which, in a few rare instances, c it were by intuition. He had been from his youth in love and admiration

met him for the first time, and recognised him at once in the inn at Mareuil, he felt no diffidence — no alarm. Nor had this confidence in himself any thing whatsoever to do with conceit: he thought not of himself for a moment; he thought only of the Duke of Guise and his situation, and impulse guided by habit did the rest. Seeing that the Duke had assumed an inferior character, he treated him accordingly; and acting as nature dictated to him, he acted right.

Neither, at Rheims, when the Duke appeared surrounded by pomp and splendour, did the *young* nobleman feel differently. He paid every tribute of external reverence to the Prince's station and high renown; but he conferred with him upon equal terms, feeling that if in mind he was not absolutely equal to that great leader, he was competent to appreciate his character, and was not inferior to him in elevation of thought and purpose.

But now, how changed were all his feelings, when, sitting by one whom he venerated and respected — more than perhaps was

deserved — he had to discuss with him the painful subject of a brother's errors, and torture imagination to find excuses which judgment would not ratify! He sat humiliated, and pained, and hesitating: he knew not what to say, and he felt that any thing he could say was vain.

For a few minutes after the rest of the party quitted the room, the Duke of Guise remained silent, sometimes gazing down, as was his habit, upon his clasped hands, sometimes raising his eyes for a single moment to the countenance of his young companion. He seemed to feel for him, indeed; and when he did speak, led the conversation to the subject gradually and delicately.

"Well, my dear Count," he said, "let us speak of this affair of the reiters. You made me as many excuses but now, for defeating our enemies, as if you had let them defeat you. Such gallant actions are easily pardoned, Logères; and if you but proceed to commit many such faults, Henry of Navarre and Henry of Guise had both need look to their renown.

There was a third Henry once," he continued, half closing his eyes, and speaking with a sigh, as he thought of Henry III. and fair promises of his youth; "there was a third Henry once, who might perhaps have borne the meed of fame away from us both: but that light has gone out in the socket, and left nothing but an unsavory smell behind. However, there was no excuse needed, good friend, for cutting to pieces double your own number of German marauders."

"My excuse was not for that," replied the Count, calmly, "but your Highness directed me to go no farther than Montigny, and I went to La Ferté, on account of the wounded men."

"That is easily excused too," said the Duke. "But now give me your own account of the affair. The boy told me the story but imperfectly. How fell you in with the reiters at first?"

Charles of Montsoreau did as the Prince required, giving a full and minute, but modest, account of all that had taken place. But when he spoke of retreating up the river to the spot where the banks were deeper, and the stream

more profound, Guise caught him by the hand, exclaiming eagerly, "Did you know that the banks were steeper? Did you see that they would guard your flank?"

"That was my object, my Lord," replied the young Count, somewhat surprised. "I noticed the nature of the ground as we charged them at first."

"Kneel down!" cried the Duke; "kneel down! Would to God that I were a Bayard for thy sake!—In the name of God, St. Michael and St. George, I dub thee knight;" and drawing his sword he struck him on the collar with the blade, adding with a smile, in which melancholy was blended with gaiety, "Perchance this may be the last chivalrous knighthood conferred in France. Indeed, as matters go, I think it will be: but if it should, I can but say that it never was won more nobly."

The young Count rose with sparkling eyes. The memory of the chivalrous ages was not yet obliterated by dust and lichens; the fire of a more enthusiastic epoch was not yet quite extinct; and he felt as if what had passed gave

him greater strength to go through what was to come.

The Duke, however, relaxing soon into his former manner, made him a sign to proceed; and Charles of Montsoreau went on to detail the complete defeat and dispersion of the different bodies of reiters. He then began to hesitate again: but Guise was determined to hear all, and said, "But your brother; where did you find your brother? Be frank with me, Logères."

Thus pressed, the young Count went on to say, that he did not again meet with his brother till he found him in the market-place at La Ferté. "My brother," he continued, "having been driven by the party that pursued him beyond the carriage, and judging that I was coming up with a superior force, imagined that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut and her attendants had fallen under my protection: but finding that such was not the case, he mounted his horse again, and proceeded to seek for her during the greater part of the night, while I did the same in another direction."

He was then hurrying on as fast as possible to speak of the following morning, but the Duke interrupted him, demanding, "There was a sharp dispute in the market-place, I think; was there not, Monsieur de Logères? Pray let me hear the particulars."

But Charles of Montsoreau, driven to the point, answered boldly and at once, "It was a dispute between two brothers, my Lord; in regard to which none but God and their own consciences can judge. You will therefore pardon me if I keep that which is private to my private bosom."

Guise gazed at him for a long — a very long time, with eyes full of deep feeling, and then replied, "By Heaven! you are one of the most extraordinary young men I ever met with. I know the whole, Monsieur de Logères; and the words there spoken let me into the secrets of your bosom which I wished to know. I now understand how to deal with you; and while I do my best to secure your happiness, trust to the Duke of Guise to avoid, as far as possible,

any thing that is painful to you in the course. But go on; let me hear the rest."

"If you know all, my Lord," said Charles of Montsoreau, a good deal affected by the Duke's kindness, "will you not spare me the telling of that which must be painful to me?"

"I fear I must ask you to go on," replied the Duke. "What you have now to tell me is the most important part of all to me at the present moment, for by it must my conduct be regulated, in regard to the measures for rescuing our poor Marie from the hands of that ——." He checked himself suddenly, and then added, "the King, in short. A single word may cause a difference in our view of the matter; and therefore I would fain hear you tell it, if you will do me that favour."

"All that I know, my Lord, I will tell," replied the Count; "but of my own knowledge I have little to tell, for the principal part of my information was derived from the boy with whom you have already spoken. All then that I personally know is, that, having slept long from great fatigue, I was roused by the boy in

horseback, and his troop in the ... out; but he was accompanied by a gentlem whom I had never seen before, whose name Colombel, and who, I found afterwards, is officer in the service of the King."

"Oh yes," said the Duke of Guise; "I ha heard him named; a person of no great repu but some cunning."

"My conversation with my brother," co tinued the Count, "was not the most agreeal On his side it was all taunts; but the only p of which it is needful to inform your Hi ness, was, that when I asked tidings of demoiselle de Clairvaut, he would afford m information, except that she was in safe h I am grieved, also, to be compelled to say he told me, if I did not join you before h ted from you."

but I cannot help fearing, Charles of Montsoreau, that your brother himself, apprehending that my regard for you might not suit his purposes, has had some share in suffering Marie to fall into the hands of Henry."

"Oh no, my Lord, oh no!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau; "you do him wrong, believe me. My Lord, a few words will explain to you the cause of his conduct. He is possessed with a passion for Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, so strong, so vehement, so intense, as to have a portion of madness in it, — a sufficient portion to make him cast away his former nature altogether, to hate his brother, to abandon his friends, to abjure all the thoughts and feelings of his youth, and to follow her still whereever she goes, seeking to obtain her by means which the very blindness of his passion prevents him from seeing are those which must insure his losing her."

"This is the passion of a weak and unstable mind," said the Duke. "Love, my young friend, is in itself a grand and ennobling thing, leading us to do great actions for the esteem and ap-

probation of her we love. The love of a bright woman," he added, "the love of a bright woman — I speak it with all due reverence," and he put his hand to his hat, "is the next finest sensation, the next grand mover in human actions, to the love of God. The object is undoubtedly inferior, but the course is the same, namely, the striving to do high and excellent things for the approbation of a being that we love and venerate. Alas that it should be so! but in this world I fear the love of woman is amongst us the strongest mover of the two: the other is so remote, so high, so pure, that our dull senses strain their wings in reaching it. The love of woman appeals to the earthly as well as to the heavenly part of man's nature, and consequently is heard more easily. Perhaps — and Heaven grant it! — that, as some of our fathers held, the one love may lead us on to the other, and the perishable be but a step to the immortal. However," he added, "such love as that which you say possesses your brother, will certainly never lead him on to any thing that is great, or high, or noble.

Most certainly it will not lead him to the hand of Marie de Clairvaut as long as Henry of Guise can draw a sword. If he have not betrayed me, he has abandoned me; if he have not shown himself a coward, he has shown himself a weak defender of those intrusted to his charge; and under such circumstances, had he the wealth of either India and the power of Cæsar, he should never wed Marie de Clairvaut." He laid his hand upon the shoulder of Charles of Montsoreau, and he said, "You have heard my words, good friend; those words are irrevocable: and now knowing that your brother can never be really your rival, act as you will. I would fain have your confidence, Charles, but I will not wring it from you. This girl is beautiful and sweet and fascinating; and if I judge right, you love her not less but more nobly than your brother. Tell me, or tell me not as you will, but we all feel pleased with confidence."

"Oh, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "how can I deny you my confidence when you load me with such proofs of your

goodness? I do love Mademoiselle de Clairvaut as deeply, as intensely, as passionately, as my brother, — more, more a thousand fold than he or any body else, I believe, is capable of loving. I had some opportunities of rendering her services, and on one of those occasions I was betrayed into words and actions which I fancied must have made her acquainted with all my feelings. It was after that I discovered, my Lord, how madly my brother loved her: it was after that I discovered that the pursuit of my love must bring contention and destruction on my father's house. Had I believed that she loved me, nothing should have made me yield her to any one; for I had the prior claim, I had the prior right: but when I had reason to believe that she had not marked, and did not comprehend all the signs of my affection; when I felt that I could quit her without the appearance of trifling with her regard, though not without the continued misery of my own life, my determination was taken in a moment, and I determined to make the sacrifice, be the consequences what they

might. Such, my Lord, is the simple truth; such is the only secret of all my actions."

The Duke of Guise bent down his eyes upon the ground with a smile, in the expression of which there was a degree of cynical bitterness. It was somewhat like one of the smiles of the Abbé de Boisguerin; but the Duke's words explained it at once, which the Abbé's never did.

"I fear, my young friend," he said, "that the science of women's hearts is a more difficult one than the science of war. You have learnt the one, it would seem, by intuition; in the other you are yet a novice. However, you shall pursue your own course, bearing with you the remembrance that I swear by my own honour —"

"Oh swear not, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "circumstances may change; she may love him; her love may alter him, and lead him back to noble things."

The Duke smiled again. "What I have said," he answered, "is as good as sworn. But have it your own way; I thank you for the

confidence you have reposed in me. And now, to show you how I can return it, I have a task to put upon you, an adventure on which to send forth my new made knight. I do not think that Henry either will or dare refuse to give up to me my own relation and ward. The king and I are great friends, God wot! But still I must demand her, and somebody must take a journey to Paris for that purpose. To the capital, doubtless, they have conveyed her; and I trust, my good Logères, that you will not think it below your dignity and merit to seek and bring back a daughter of the House of Guise."

Charles of Montsoreau paused thoughtfully for a moment, ere he replied. All the difficulties and dangers to which he might be exposed, in acting against the views of the King of France, were to him as nothing; but the difficulties and dangers which might arise from his opposition to his own brother, were painful and fearful to him to contemplate. He saw not, however, how he could refuse the task; and it cannot be denied that love for Marie de

Clairvaut had its share also in making him accept it. He doubted not for a moment, that if she were in the hands of the King, she was there against her own will; and could he, he asked himself, could he even hesitate to aid in delivering her from a situation of difficulty, danger, and distress? The thought of aiding her, the thought of seeing her again, the thought of hearing the sweet tones of that beloved voice, the thought of once more soothing and supporting her, all had their share; the very contemplation made his heart beat; and lifting his eyes, he found those of the Duke of Guise fixed upon his countenance, reading all the passing emotions, the shadows of which were brought across him by those thoughts. The colour mounted slightly into his cheek as he replied, "My Lord, I will do your bidding to the best of my ability. When shall I march?"

"Oh, you mistake," said the Duke, laughing; "you are not to go at the head of your men, armed *cap-à-pié*, to deliver the damsel from the giant's castle; but in the quality of

my envoy to Henry; first of all demanding, quietly and gently, where the Lady is, and then requiring him to deliver her into your hands, for the purpose of escorting her to me, wherever I may be. You shall have full powers for the latter purpose; but you must keep them concealed till such time as you have discovered, either from the King's own lips — though no sincerity dwells upon them — or by your own private inquiries and investigations, where this poor girl is. Then you may produce to the King your powers from me, and to herself I will give you a letter, requesting her to follow your directions in all things. Now, you must show yourself as great a diplomatist as a soldier, for I can assure you that you will have to deal with as artful and as wily a man as any now living in Europe."

"I will do my best, my Lord; and to enable me to deal with them before all their plans are prepared, I had better set out at break of day to-morrow, with as many men as your Highness thinks fit should accompany me."

The Duke mused for a moment or two; "No," he said, "no; I must not let you go, Logères, without providing for your safety. You have risked your life sufficiently for me and mine already. You go into new scenes, with which you are unacquainted; into dangers, with which you may find it more difficult to cope than any that you have hitherto met with. I cannot then suffer you to depart without such passports and safeguards as may diminish those dangers as far as possible."

"Oh, I fear not, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "the King and your Highness are not at war. I have done nothing to offend, and —"

"It cannot be, it cannot be," replied the Duke. "You must go back with me to Soissons. I will send a messenger from this place to demand the necessary passports for you. No great time will be lost, for a common courier can pass where you or I would be stopped. Then," he continued, "as to the men that you should take with you, I should say, the fewer the better. Mark me," he continued,

hundred men on the notice of half an ... Ay, more, should you require them. But not these letters except in the last neces: for they might hurry on events which I wo rather see advance slowly till they were for upon me, than do aught to bring them forw myself. No; you shall go back with me Soissons, guarding me with your band; I doubt not, our messenger from Paris not be many hours after us. Now leave and to rest, good Logères, and send in servant, whom you will find half way dow stairs."

The young Count withdrew without an word, and he found that while the conver between himself and the Duke had been on, a man had been stationed, both abo ... of the apartment, a

Early on the following morning the whole party mounted their horses, the wounded men of Logères were left under the care and attendance of the good townsmen of Montigny, and the young Count riding with the party of the Duke of Guise, proceeded on the road to Soissons. No adventure occurred to disturb their progress; and, as so constantly happens in the midst of scenes of danger, pain, and difficulty, almost every one of the whole party endeavoured to compensate for the frequent endurance of peril and pain by filling up the intervals with light laughter and unthinking gaiety. The Duke of Guise himself was not the least cheerful of the party, though occasionally the cloud of thought would settle again upon his brow, and a pause of deep meditation would interrupt the jest or the sally. It was late at night when they arrived at Soissons, and the Duke, after supping with the Cardinal de Bourbon, retired to rest, without conversing with any of his party. It was about eight o'clock on the following morning, and while, by the dull grey light of a cloudy spring day,

door op
ment, and the Duke of Guise, clad in a dress
gown of crimson velvet trimmed with miniv
entered the room, bearing in his hand a pac
of sealed letters, and one open one. A p
followed him with something wrapped up
a skin of leather, which he placed upon one
the stools, and instantly retired.

" Send away your man, Count," said
Duke, seating himself; "resume your dressi
gown, and kindly give me your full atten
for half an hour. You will be so good,'
continued, turning to the man who was quit
the chamber, " as to take your stand on the
landing-place below this door. You will
any body whom you see coming up to pa
the other staircase; any one you may see co
down, you will direct to pass by this

he now spoke made his exit from the room, stumbling over twenty things in his haste to obey. As soon as he was gone, the Duke turned to his young friend, and continued, " Here is the King's safeguard under his own hand, and the necessary passports for yourself and two attendants. Here is your letter of credit to him in my name, requiring him to give you every sort of information which he may be possessed of regarding the subjects which you will mention to him; and here is a third letter giving you full power to demand at his hands the person of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, for the purpose of escorting her and placing her under my protection. This, again, is to Mary herself, bidding her follow your counsels and direction in every thing; and these others are to certain citizens of Paris, whose names you will find written thereon. If you will take my advice, you will again take with you the boy Ignati, and one stout man-at-arms, unarmed, however, except in such a manner as the dangers of the road require. You understand, I think, clearly, all that I wish."

"I believe, my Lord, I do," replied the Count. "But how am I to insure safety for Mademoiselle de Clairvaut on the road, without an adequate force?"

"Write to me but one word," replied the Duke of Guise, "as soon as she is delivered into your hands, and I will send you with all speed whatever forces I can spare. But I have one or two things to communicate to you, which it is necessary for you to know, both for your own security and the success of your mission. The principal part of my niece's lands lie in the neighbourhood of Châteauneuf, between Dreux and Mortagne in Normandy. It is not at all unlikely, that, if driven to remove her from your sight, Henry may be tempted to send her thither, well knowing that it is what I have always opposed, and that I preferred rather that she should dwell even in Languedoc than be in that neighbourhood. For this I had a reason; and that reason is the near relationship in which her father stood to the most daring and the most dangerous man in France. One of the first of those whom you

will see near the person of the King, the man who governs and rules him to his own infamy and destruction, in whose hands the minions are but tools and Henry an instrument, who, more than any one else, has tended to change a gracious prince, a skilful general, and a brave man, into an effeminate and vicious king, is René de Villequier, Baron of Clairvaut. He was first cousin to Marie de Clairvaut's father, and he is consequently her nearest male relation out of the family of Guise. He has, indeed, sometimes hinted at a right to share in the guardianship of his cousin's daughter. But such things a Guise permits not. However, with this claim upon the disposal of her hand, Henry may, perhaps, hesitate to yield her, unless with the consent of Villequier. With him, then, you may be called upon to deal; but Villequier, I think, knows the hand of a Guise too well to call down a blow from it unnecessarily. However, he is as daring as he is artful, and impunity in crime has rendered him perfectly careless of committing it. He is

Governor of Paris, one of the King's ministers, a Knight of the Holy Ghost. Now hear what he has done to merit all this. More than one assassin broken on the wheel has avowed himself the instrument of Villequier, sent to administer poison to those he did not love. Complaisant in every thing to his King, he sought to sacrifice to him the honour of his wife: but she differed from him in her tastes; and, on the eighteenth of last September, in broad daylight, in the midst of an effeminate court, he murdered her with his own hand at her dressing-table. Nor was this all: there was a girl—a young sweet girl—the natural daughter of a noble house, who was holding before the unhappy lady a mirror to arrange her dress when the fatal blow was struck. The fiend's taste for blood was roused. One victim was not enough, and he murdered the wretched girl by the side of her dead mistress. This was done in open day, was never disowned, was known to every one, and was rewarded by the order of the Holy Ghost — an insult to God,

to France, and to humanity.* However, as with this man you may have to deal, I have to give you two cautions. Never drink wine with him, or eat food at his table; never go into his presence without wearing under your other dress the bosom friend which I have brought you there;" and he took from the leathern skin in which it was wrapped, a shirt of mail, made of rings linked together, so fine that it seemed the lightest stroke would have broken it, and yet so strong, that the best tempered poinard, driven by the most powerful hand, could not have pierced it. "Have also in your bosom," continued the Duke of Guise, "a small pistol; and if the villain attempts to lay his hand upon you, kill him like a dog. This is the only way to deal with René de Villequier."

The young Count smiled: "And is it needful my Lord Duke," he asked, "to take all these precautions in the courtly world of Paris? — Do you yourself take them, my Lord? — I fear not sufficiently."

* All these charges were but too true.

"Oh! with regard to myself," replied the Duke, it is different. "I am so marked out and noted, they dare not do any thing against me. They would raise up a thousand vengeful hands against them in a moment, and they know that, too well to run such a risk. Neither Henry nor Villequier would hold their lives by an hour's tenure after Guise was dead. But you must take these precautions, my young friend. And now I have nothing more to say, except that, whatever you do to withdraw Marie de Clairvaut from the hands into which she has fallen, I will justify. If any ill befall you, I will avenge you as my brother; and if you deliver her from those whom she hates and abhors, she shall give you any testimony of her gratitude that she pleases, without a man in France saying you nay."

"Oh, my Lord, it is not for that I go!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, with the blood rushing up again into his cheek. "It is not; surely you believe—"

"Hush! hush!" replied the Duke. "I have fallen into the foolish error of saying too much,

my good young friend. But now, fare you well. Make your arrangements as speedily as you can; mount your horse, and onward to Paris, while I apply myself to matters which may well occupy every minute and every thought."

CHAP. III.

It was about nine o'clock at night, in the spring of the year 1588, that Charles of Montsoreau, with two companions, his faithful Gondrin and the little page, presented himself at the gate of Paris which opened upon the Soissons road. A surly arquebusier with a steel cap on his head, his gun upon his shoulder, and the rest thereof in his hand, was the first person that he encountered at the bridge over the fosse. Some other soldiers were sitting before the guard-house; and the wicket-gate of the city itself was open, with an armed head protruded through, talking to a country girl with a basket on her arm, who had just passed out of the gate, none the better probably for her visit to the city.

The arquebusier planted himself immediately in the way of the young cavalier and his fol-

lowers, and seemed prepared to stop them, though on the young Count applying to him for admission, he replied in a surly tone, "I have nothing to do with it. Ask the lieutenant at the gate."

To him, in the next place, then, Charles of Montsoreau applied; but though his tone was somewhat more civil than that of the soldier, he made a great many difficulties, examining the young nobleman all over, and looking as if he thought him a very suspicious personage. The Count after a certain time grew impatient, and asked, "You do not mean, I suppose, to refuse the passport of the King?"

"No," replied the other grinning. "We won't refuse the passport of the King, or the King's passport; but in order that the passport may be verified, it were as well, young gentleman, that you come to the gates by day. You can sleep in the faubourg for one night I take it."

"Certainly not without great inconvenience to myself," replied the Count, "and more inconvenience to the affairs of the Duke of Guise."

"The Duke of Guise!" said the man starting. "Your tongue has not the twang of Lorraine."

"But nevertheless," replied the Count, "the business I come upon is that of the Duke of Guise, which you would have seen if you had read the passport and safe-conduct. Does it not direct therein, to give room and free passage, safeguard, and protection to one gentleman of noble birth and two attendants, coming and going hither and thither in all parts of the realm of France, on the especial business of our true and well-beloved cousin, Henry, Duke of Guise? and is there not written in the Duke's own hand underneath, 'Given to our faithful friend and counsellor, Charles of Montsoreau, Count of Logères, for the purposes above written, by me, Henry of Guise?'"

The man held the paper for a moment to a lantern that hung up against the heavy stonework of the arch, and then exclaimed in a loud voice, "Throw open the gates there, bring the keys. Monseigneur, I beg you a thousand pardons for detaining you a minute. If I had but

seen the writing of the Duke of Guise the doors would have been opened instantly."

As rapidly as possible the heavy gates, which had remained immoveable at the order of the King, swang back at the name of the Guise, and one of the attendants and the captain of the night running by the side of the Count's horse to prevent all obstruction, caused the second gate to be opened as rapidly, and the Count entered the capital city of his native country for the first time in his life.

The streets were dark and gloomy, narrow and high; and as one rode along them looking up from time to time towards the sky, the small golden stars were seen twinkling above the deep walls of the houses, as if beheld from the bottom of a well. Charles of Montsoreau had not chosen to ask his way at the gate, and though utterly unacquainted with the great city in which he now plunged, he rode on, trusting to find some shop still open where he might inquire his way without the chance of being deceived. Every booth and shop was then shut, however; and for a very long way up the

street which he had first entered, he met with not a single living creature to whom he could apply for direction. At length, however, that street ended abruptly in another turning to the left, and a sudden glare of light burst upon his eyes, proceeding from a building about a hundred yards farther on, which seemed to be on fire.

There was no bustle, however, or indication of any thing unusual in the street; and Charles of Montsoreau riding on, found that the blaze proceeded from a dozen or more of flambeaus planted in a sort of wooden barricade* before a large mansion, which fell back some yards from the general façade of the street, while a fat porter clothed in manifold colours, with a broad shoulder-belt and a sword by his side, walked to and fro in the light, trimming the torches with stately dignity. The young Count then remembered having heard of the custom of thus illuminating the barriers, which were before all the principal mansions in

* One or two of these houses with barriers were still existing in Paris not many years ago.

Paris during the first part of every night; and riding up towards the porter, he demanded whose hotel it was, and begged to be directed to one of the best inns in the neighbourhood.

The man gazed at him for a moment with the evident purpose of looking upon him as a bumpkin; but the porters of that day were required to be extremely discriminating, and the air and appearance of the young Count were not to be mistaken, and bowing low he replied, "I see you are a stranger, sir. This is the house of Monsieur d'Aumont. As to the best inn, inns are always but poor places; but I have heard a good account of the White House in the next street, at the sign of the Crown of France. If you go on quite to the end of this street and then turn to your right, you will come into another street as large and longer, at the very end of which, just looking down to the Pont Neuf, you will see a large white house with a gateway and the crown hanging over it. I have heard that every thing is good there, and the host civil; but he will make you pay for what you have."

"That is but just," replied the young Count; and giving the porter thanks for his information, he rode on and took up his abode at the sign of the Crown of France.

The aspect of the inn was very different from that of an auberge in the country; for, though the court-yard into which Charles of Montsoreau rode was littered with straw, and a large and splendid stable appeared behind, it was not now grooms and stable-boys that appeared on the first notice of a traveller's approach, but cooks and scullions and turnspits; while the master himself with a snow-white cap upon his head, a jacket of white cloth, and a white apron turned up sufficiently to show his black breeches and stockings with red clocks, appeared more like what he really was, the head of the kitchen, than the master of the house.

He looked a little suspiciously, at first, at the young stranger arriving with only two attendants, and with no other baggage than a small valise upon each horse, and an additional upon that of Ignati, to render the boy's weight equal to that of his fellow travellers. But the

host was accustomed to deal with many kinds of men; and like the porter, after examining the Count for a moment, seeing some gold embroidery, but not much, upon his riding-dress, gilded spurs over his large boots of untanned leather, and a sword, the hilt and sheath of which were of no slight value, he also made a lowly reverence, and conducted him to one of the best apartments in his house. It consisted of three rooms, each entering into the other with a small cabinet beyond the chief bed-room; and the arrangements which the Count made at once — placing Gondrin's bed in the antechamber, and having the page's truckle-bed removed from his own bed-side to occupy the cabinet beyond — gave the host of the Crown of France a still greater idea of his importance.

Charles of Montsoreau did not fail to examine the face of the aubergiste, and to remark his proceedings with as much accuracy. The man's countenance was intelligent, his eyes quick and piercing, but withal there was an air of straightforward frankness, tempered by civility and habitual politeness, which was prepossessing; and

as the young Count knew that he might have occasion to make use of him in various ways during his stay in Paris, he resolved to try him with those things which were the most immediately necessary, and which at the same time were of the least importance.

"Stop a minute, my good host," he said, as the man was about to withdraw to order fires to be lighted and suppers to be cooked. "There are some things which press for attention, and in which I must have your assistance."

"This youngster speaks with a tone of authority," thought the aubergiste; but he bowed low and said nothing, whilst the young Count went on, "What is your name, my good friend?" demanded Charles of Montsoreau.

"I am called Gamin la Chaise," replied the aubergiste with a smile.

"Well then, Master la Chaise, as you see," he continued, "I have come hither to Paris on some business which required a certain degree of despatch, and have ventured with few attendants and little baggage. As however the business on which I did come will call me into scenes where

some greater degree of splendour is necessary than perhaps either suits my taste or my general convenience, I must before I go forth to-morrow morning, have my train increased by at least six attendants, who are always to be found in Paris ready fashioned I know; and therefore I must beseech you to find them for me in proper time, having them equipped in my proper colours and livery, according as the same shall be described to you by my good friend Gondrin here. This is the first service you must do me, my good host."

"Sir," replied the landlord, "the six lackeys shall be found and equipped in less time than would roast a woodcock. They are as plenty as sparrows or house-rats, and are caught in a moment."

"Yes, but my good host," answered the Count, "there is one great difficulty which you will understand in a moment. Amongst the six, I want you to find me one honest man if it be possible."

The landlord raised his shoulders above his ears, stuck out his two hands horizontally from

his sides, and assumed an appearance of despair at the unheard of proposition of the Count, which had nearly brought a smile into the young nobleman's countenance. "That indeed, sir," he said, "is another affair; and I believe you might just as well ask me to catch you a wild roe in the garden of the Louvre, as to find you the thing that you demand. Nevertheless, labour and perseverance conquer all difficulties: and now I think of it, there is a youth who may answer your purpose; he knows Paris well too; but, strange to say, by some unaccountable fit of obstinacy, he would not tell a lie the other day to the Duke of Epernon in order to pass an item of the intendant's accounts, which would have come in for a good round sum every month if he would but have sworn that he used five quarts of milk every week to whiten the leather of his master's boots. He would not swear to this, and therefore the intendant discharged him, as he was a hired servant."

"Let me have him; let me have him," cried the Count. "I will only ask him to tell the truth, and hope he may not find that so difficult."

The Count then proceeded to speak about horses, and the host readily undertook, finding that money was abundant, to procure all the horse-dealers in Paris with their best steeds, before nine o'clock on the following day. The demeanour of the young nobleman, it must be confessed, puzzled the good aubergiste a good deal; and on going down to his own abode, he acknowledged to his wife, what he seldom acknowledged to any one, that he could not make his guest out at all.

"I should think," he said, "from the plenty of money, and the expensive way in which he seems inclined to deal, that he was some wild stripling from the provinces, the son of a rich president or advocate lately dead, who came hither to call himself Count, and spend his patrimony in haste. But then, again, in some things he is as shrewd as an old hawk, and can jest withal about rogues and honest men, while he keeps his own secrets close, and lets no one ask him a question."

On the following morning, at an early hour, the six attendants whom he had required were

brought before him in array, exhibiting, with one exception, as sweet a congregation of roguish faces as the great capital of roguery ever yet produced. The countenance of the lad who had been discharged from the service of the Duke of Epernon pleased the young Count much, and without waiting till he was farther equipped, he put Gondrin under his charge for the purpose of notifying at the palace of the Louvre that he had arrived in the capital, bearing a letter from the Duke of Guise to the King, and of begging to have an hour named for its delivery. He found, however, with some mortification—for his eager spirit and his anxiety brooked no delay — that the King was at Vincennes; and his only consolation was that the communication which he had sent to the palace, bearing the fearful name of the Duke of Guise, was certain to be communicated to the monarch as soon as possible. Some short time was expended in the purchase of horses, and in making various additions to his own apparel, well knowing the ostentatious splendour of the court he was about to visit.

We have indeed remarked that there was perhaps a touch of foppery in his own nature, though it was but slight. Nevertheless, splendour of appearance certainly pleased him, even while a natural good taste led him to admire, and to seek in his own dress, all that was graceful and harmonising, rather than that which was rich or brilliant.

He was thus engaged, with several tradesmen around him, ordering the materials for various suits of apparel, which a tailor standing by engaged to produce in a miraculously short time, when the door of his apartment was opened, and a somewhat fat pursy man in black was admitted, entering with an air of importance, and receiving the lowly salutations of the good citizens who were present. Charles of Montsoreau gazed at him as a stranger; but the good man, with an air of importance, and an affectation of courtly breeding, besought him to finish what he was about, adding, that he had a word for his private ear which he would communicate afterwards. The young Count, without further

ceremony, continued to give his orders, examining his new visiter from time to time, and with no very great feelings of satisfaction.

The countenance was fat, reddish, and, upon the whole, stupid, with an air of indecision about it which was very strongly marked, though there was every now and then a certain drawing in of the fringeless eyelids round the small black eyes, which gave the expression of intense cunning to features otherwise dull and flat.

When he had completely done with his mercers, and tailors, and cloth-makers — who had occupied him some time, for he did not hurry himself — Charles of Montsoreau dismissed them; and turning to his visiter said, "Now, sir, may I have the happiness of knowing your business with me?"

"Sir," replied the other, rising and speaking in a low and confidential tone, "my name is Nicolas Poulain. I am Lieutenant of the Prévôt de l'Isle."

He stopped short at this announcement; and the Count, after waiting a moment for some-

thing more, replied somewhat angrily, "Well, sir, I am very happy to hear it. I hope the office suits Nicolas Poulain, and Nicolas Poulain suits the office."

A slight redness came into the man's face, rendering it a shade deeper than it ordinarily was; but finding it necessary to reply, as the Count, without sitting down, remained looking him stedfastly in the face, he answered, "I thought, sir, — indeed I took it for granted, sir, that you might have some communication for me from the Duke of Guise."

"None whatever, sir," replied the young Count drily. "Have you any thing to tell me, Monsieur Nicolas Poulain, on the part of his Highness?"

"No, sir, no," replied the other, attempting to assume an air of spirit which did not become him. "If you have not seen him more lately than I have, I am misinformed."

"And pray, my good sir," demanded the Count, "who was it that took the trouble of informing you of any thing regarding me?"

"That question is soon answered, sir," re-

plied Nicolas Poulain, "though you seem to make so much difficulty in regard to answering mine. The person who informed me of your arrival was good Master Chapelle Marteau, who saw you last night at the gates when you entered."

The name immediately struck the young Count as the same with one of those written on the letters which the Duke of Guise had given him to be used in case of need; but feeling how necessary it was to deal carefully with any of the faction of the Sixteen, to which both Chapelle Marteau and Nicolas Poulain belonged, he determined to say not one word upon the subject of his mission to any one. Much less, indeed, was he inclined to do so in the case of Nicolas Poulain, in whose face nature had stamped deceit and roguery in such legible characters, that the young Count, had he been forced to trust him with any secret, would have felt sure that the whole would be betrayed within an hour. All, then, that he replied to Master Nicolas Poulain was, that though he knew well the personage he men-

tioned by name, he had not the pleasure of his personal acquaintance.

The answers were so short, the tone and manner so dry, that the worthy citizen found it expedient to make his retreat; and taking a short and unceremonious leave of one who had given him so cool a reception, he left the Count's apartments, and descended the stairs. The moment he was gone, some suspicion, which crossed the young cavalier's mind suddenly, made him call the page, and bid him follow his late visiter till he marked the house which Master Nicolas entered, taking care to remember the way back.

The boy set off without a word, and returned in less than half an hour, informing the young Count that he had tracked Master Nicolas Poulain into a large house, which, on inquiry, he found to be the private dwelling of the Lord of Villequier.

"The Duke is betrayed by some of these leaguers, — that is clear enough!" thought the young Count. "I have heard that many of his best enterprises have been frustrated by

some unknown means. Who is there on earth that one can trust?" And leaning his head upon his hand he fell into deep thought, for to him the question of whom he could trust was at that moment one, not only entirely new, but one of deep and vital importance also. In his journey to Paris he had two great and all-important objects before him. To find out his brother, and, if possible, to persuade him to change a course of conduct which he felt to be dishonourable to himself and to his house, was one of these objects; and he doubted not that — if he could fully explain, and make the Marquis comprehend, his own conduct and his purposes — if he could show him that his only chance of obtaining the hand of Marie de Clairvaut was by attaching himself to the House of Guise, and that he had not a brother's rivalry to fear — Gaspar de Montsoreau might be induced to return to the party he had quitted, and not finally to commit himself to conduct so little to his own interest as that which he was pursuing.

The other object, however, was much more

important even than that, to the heart of Charles of Montsoreau; and the feelings which were connected with it — as so often happens with the feelings which affect every one in human life — were sadly at variance with other purposes. That object was to discover and guide to the court of the Duke of Guise, her whom he himself loved best on all the earth; to free her from the hands of the base and dangerous people into whose power she had fallen, and to leave her in security, if not in happiness.

When he thought of seeing her again, — when he thought of passing days with her on the journey, of being her guide, her protector, her companion, the overpowering longing and thirst for such a joyful time shook and agitated him, made his heart thrill and his brain reel; and, bending down his face upon his hands, he gave himself up for a long time to whirling dreams of happiness. But then again he asked himself if, after such hours, he could ever quit her; if — following the firm purpose with which he had left Montsoreau — he

could resist all temptation to seek her love further, and after plunging into the contentions of the day could dedicate his sword and his life, as he had intended, to warfare against the infidels in the order of St. John? There was a great struggle in his mind when he asked himself the question — a great and terrible struggle; but at length he answered it in the affirmative. "Yes," he said; "yes, I can do so!" But there was a condition attached to that decision. "I can do so," he said, "if I find that there is a chance of her wedding him; if I find that, in reality and truth, the first bright hopes I entertained were indeed fallacious."

To say the truth, doubts had come over his mind as to whether he had construed Marie de Clairvaut's conduct rightly. Those doubts had been instilled into his imagination by the words of the Duke of Guise. Fancy lingered round them: shall we say that Hope, too, played with them? If she did so, it was against his will; for he was in that sad and painful situation where hope, reproved by the highest feelings of the heart, dare scarcely point to the objects of

desire. Terrible — terrible is that situation where Virtue, or Honour, or Generosity bind down imagination, silence even hope, and shut against us the gates of that paradise we see, but must not enter. These, indeed, are the angels with the flaming swords.

Charles of Montsoreau would not suffer himself to hope any thing that might make his brother's misery; but yet fancy would conjure up bright dreams; and knowing and feeling that if those dreams were realised, a complete change must come over his actions and his conduct, he saw that it would be needful to use guarded language to his brother, — or rather to use only the guard of perfect frankness. He resolved, then, to tell him fully his purposes, but to tell him at the same time the conditions under which those circumstances were to be executed.

As he pondered, however, and thought over the changed demeanour of his brother, over the fiery impetuosity and impatience of his whole temper and conduct, he remembered that it might be with difficulty

that he could obtain a hearing for a sufficient length of time to explain himself fully, and he consequently determined to write clearly and explicitly, so that there might be no error or mistake whatever, and that his conduct might remain clear and undoubted; and sitting down at once, he did as he proposed, that he might have the letter ready to send or to deliver as soon as he discovered where his brother was.

The epistle was short, but it was distinct. He referred boldly and directly to his conversation with the Abbé de Boisguerin; he explained his conduct since; and he told his decided and unchangeable purpose of seeking in no way the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, unless he had reason to believe that the deep attachment which he felt and acknowledged towards her were already returned. He ended by exhorting his brother to do that which his pledges and professions to the Duke of Guise had bound him to do, to guide back Mademoiselle de Clairvaut himself to the protection of her uncle, and to avert the necessity of his seeking her and conducting her to Soissons.

In thus letting his thoughts flow on in collateral channels from subject to subject, he had deviated from the original object of his contemplations, which was, the method to be pursued for instituting private inquiries throughout the city, in regard to the arrival, both of his brother and Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. Unacquainted with any persons in Paris, he knew not how to set on foot the inquiry; and his mind had just reverted to the subject, which appeared more and more embarrassing each time he thought of it, when he was informed, with an air of great importance, by the host, that Monsieur Chapelle Marteau demanded humbly to have the honour of paying him his respects.

The Count ordered him instantly to be ushered in; and, during the brief moment that intervened before he appeared, considered hastily, whether he should employ this personage in any way in making the inquiries that were necessary. He knew that he was highly esteemed by the Duke of Guise; but yet it was evident that, by some of the mem-

bers of, or the followers of, the League in Paris, the Duke was himself entirely deceived; and yet Charles of Montsoreau was more inclined to trust this man's sincerity than that of the person who had left him some short time before, inasmuch as the Duke had addressed one of the private letters we have before mentioned to him, while he had never named the other. The countenance and appearance of Chapelle Marteau confirmed any prepossession in his favour. It was quick, and intelligent, and frank, though somewhat stern; and he had moreover the air and bearing of a man in the higher ranks of life, although he held but an office which was then considered inferior, that of one of the Masters in the Chamber of Accounts.

"I come, sir," he said, as soon as the first civilities were over, "to ask your pardon for some quickness on my part in refusing you admittance at the gates last night. The fact is, that bad-intentioned people have been endeavouring to introduce into the city of Paris, under the King's name, a multitude of

soldiery, in twos and threes, for the purpose of overawing us in the pursuit of our rights and liberties."

"Say no more, say no more, Monsieur Chapelle," said the Count; "I doubt not you had very good reasons for what you did."

He then paused, leaving his companion to pursue the subject as he might think fit; and the leaguer seemed somewhat embarrassed as to how he should proceed, though his embarrassment showed itself in a different manner from that of Master Nicolas Poulain. At length he said, "I entertained some hope, sir, that you might bring me a communication from the Duke of Guise, as, when I had the honour of seeing him at Gonesse three days ago, he gave me the hope that he would write to me ere long."

"No, Monsieur Chapelle," replied the Count deliberately; "I have no message for you. His Highness directed me indeed to apply to you in case of need; and I know that he has the highest esteem for you, believing you to be a zealous defender of our holy

faith, and a man well worthy of every consideration; — but I have no present message to you from the Duke; and the case in which it may be necessary to apply to you for assistance, according to his Highness's direction, has not yet arrived."

"Most delighted shall I be, my Lord* Count," replied the leaguer, "to afford you any aid or assistance or council in my power, both on account of his Highness the Duke of Guise and on your own. Might I ask what is the case foreseen, in which you are to apply to me?"

The Count smiled. "In case, Monsieur Chapelle," he said, "that I do not succeed in objects which the Duke has entrusted to me by other means, you shall know. At present, however, I have had no opportunity of ascer-

* The word Monseigneur, my Lord, which in the days of Louis XIV. had become restricted to a very few high dignitaries, or only given to other noblemen by their own servants and tenantry, was in the reign of Henry III. commonly used to all high noblemen, and we find constantly titles addressed *A mon tres illustre et tres honoré Seigneur le Marquis*; or, *A l'illustre Seigneur, Monseigneur le Comte de* ———.

taining what may be necessary to be done, finding that the King is at Vincennes. In the mean time I am employing myself about some personal business of my own, which I am afraid is likely to give me trouble."

He spoke quite calmly; but a look of intelligence came immediately over the countenance of Chapelle Marteau, and he said, "Perhaps I might be enabled to assist your Lordship. My knowledge of Paris, and all that is transacted therein, is very extensive."

"You are very kind," replied the Count, "and I take advantage of your offer with the greatest pleasure. The matter is a very simple one. My elder brother, the Marquis de Montsoreau, set out some time ago to join the Duke of Guise, having under his charge and escort a young lady, named Mademoiselle de Clairvaut."

"Daughter of the Duke of Guise's niece," said Chapelle Marteau with some emphasis.

"I believe that is the relationship," answered the young nobleman. "But, however, the facts are these: I have reason to believe that my

de Clairvaut under the protection
the King's troops coming to Paris
wish is, to ascertain whether he o
party, either separately or together
Paris, and where they are to be fo

The leaguer gazed in his face f
or two with an inquiring look, a
plied, "I can tell you at once, m
no considerable party whatever
the gates of Paris under the pro
King's troops for the last ten da
of even ten in number having th
Valois having appeared during
But the party you mention may h
by themselves without the King's
I rather suspect that they ha
However, I will let you know th

Lord, that there may be more intelligence required about them than you choose to ask for at once."

The young Count smiled again, but merely replied, "Any information that you can obtain for me, Monsieur Chapelle, will be received by me most gratefully; and in the mean time will you do me the honour of partaking my poor dinner which is about to be served?"

The leaguer, however, declined the high honour, alleging important business as his excuse; and, after having dined, the young Count rode out through the streets of Paris, endeavouring to make himself somewhat familiar with them, and feeling all those sensations which the sight of that great capital might well produce on one who had never beheld it before. On those sensations, however, we must not pause, as matters of more importance are before us. A couple of hours after nightfall he received a note to the following effect: —

"The Marquis de Montsoreau, with a body of horsemen, bearing no badge or ensign,



carriage, containing ladies an
was escorted to Vincennes th
body of troops of Valois. Th
the ladies was ascertained to
de Saulny."

Charles of Montsoreau recei
with a beating heart, and sle
his eyelids till the clock of
church had struck five in the m

CHAP. IV.

Dark heavy clouds hung over the world, and totally obscured the face of the sky; the morning was chill, the air keen, and the eye of the peasant was often turned up towards the leaden-looking masses of vapour above his head, as if to inquire whether their stores would be poured forth in lightning or in snow; and as Charles of Montsoreau rode on through the park to the Donjon of Vincennes, he felt the gloomy aspect of the whole scene more than he might have done at any other time.

There, before his eyes, with the whole face of nature harmonising well with its dark and frowning aspect, rose the grey gigantic keep, which the vanquished opponent of Edward III., the rash and half-insane founder of the race of Valois, erected at an early period of his melancholy reign. Story above story,

the beauty of harmony, for no one h
to the harsh and solemn features of th
architecture the gewgaw ornaments o
age. The gallery of Marie de Medic
built, and nothing was seen but the anti
of the Donjon itself, with the mass of
rounding its base with their flanking
pinnacle or two rising above — as if f
low Gothic building within the walls -
still dark fosse surrounding the whole

We form but a faint idea to our
very very faint idea of the manners an
of feudal times; but still less, perha
form any just idea of the every-day e
crimes, and vices, that were commit
period we now speak of, and of what
live familiarly in the midst of such s

world of Paris heard with scarcely an emotion that this nobleman had been poisoned by another — that the hand of the assassin had delivered one high lord of this troublesome friend or that pertinacious enemy — that the husband had "drugged the posset" for the wife, or the wife for the husband — or that persons obnoxiously wise or virtuous disappeared within the walls of such places as Vincennes, and passed suddenly with their good acts into that oblivion which is the general recompense of all that is excellent upon earth. No one noted such deeds; the sword of justice started from the scabbard once or twice in a century, but that was all; and the world laughed as merrily — the jest and the repartee went on — sport, love, and folly revelled as gaily through the streets of Paris, as if it had been a world of gentleness, and security, and peace.

Though of course Charles of Montsoreau felt in some degree the spirit of the day — though he thought it nothing at all extraordinary to be attacked by reiters in his own château, or stopped by fifty or sixty plunderers on the

yet the whole of his previous life navin
far from the daily occurrence of still
volting scenes, in spots where calm na
God's handiwork were still at hand to p
heal men's thoughts, he had very differ
ings in regard to the events and custon
day from those which were generally en
by the people of the metropolis. Thus,
gazed up at the gloomy tower of Vince
thought of the deeds which had been c
within its walls, together with the c
follies that were daily there enacted,
of mingled horror and disgust took po
his bosom; and had he not been impe
sense of duty, he would not have s
upon the threshold of those polluted

The order to appear before the Ki

time, and was instantly led into the château, and conducted up a long, darksome, winding stone staircase in one of the towers. Everything took place almost in silence; few persons were to be seen moving about in the building; and, while winding up those stairs, nothing was heard but the footfalls of himself and the attendant who conducted him.

Charles of Montsoreau certainly felt neither awe nor fear as he thus advanced, though some of the warnings of the Duke of Guise might cross his mind at the moment; but at the end of what seemed to be the first story, the attendant said, "Wait a moment;" and, pushing open a door, entered a room to the right. There was another door beyond, but both were left partly unclosed, and the previous silence was certainly no longer to be complained of, for such a jabbering, and screaming, and yelling, and howling, as was now heard, was probably never known in the palace of a king, before or since.

Human sounds they seemed certainly not to be, and yet words in various languages were to be distinguished, so that conjecture was quite

par a limit. All after an absence of several minutes the attendant returned, and, bidding the young nobleman follow him, led the way once more into this den of noise and confusion.

The scene that then burst upon the eyes of Charles of Montsoreau was as curious as can well be conceived. Innumerable parrots, macaws, and cockatoos were ranged on perches and in cages along the sides of a large apartment, with intervals of monkeys and apes racing their chains, springing forward at every object near them, mouthing, chattering, and writhing themselves into fantastic forms: six or seven small beautiful dogs of a peculiar breed were running about on the floor, snarling at one another, barking at the stranger, or teasing the other animals in the same room with themselves: baskets filled with litters of puppies were in every corner of the room: and several men and women were engaged in tending the winged and quadruped favourites of the King. Not only, however, were the regular attendants present, but, as one of the known ways to Henry's regard, a great number of other persons were

always to be found busily engaged in tending the monkeys, parrots, and dogs. Amongst the rest here present, were no less than five dwarfs, four others being in actual attendance upon the King. None were above three feet and a half in height, and some were deformed and distorted in the most fearful manner, while one was perfectly and beautifully formed, and seemed to hold the others in great contempt. The voices of almost all of them, however, were cracked and screaming; and it was the sounds of their tongues, mingled with the yelping of the dogs, the chattering of the monkeys, and the various words repeated in different languages by the loquacious birds along the wall, which had made the Babel of sounds that reached the ears of Charles of Montsoreau while he stood without.

Passing through this room, with the envious eyes of the dwarfs staring upon his fine figure, the young Count entered the chamber of the pages—where, as if for the sake of contrast, a number of beautiful youths were seen — and was thence led on into the royal apartments, in which

every thing was calm splendour and magnificence. Here and there various officers of the royal household were found lounging away the idle hours as they waited for the King's commands; and at length, in an ante-room, the young Count was bade to wait again, while the attendant once more notified his coming to the King. He was scarcely detained a moment now, however; but, the door being opened, he was ushered into the monarch's presence.

Henry on the present occasion presented an aspect different from that which the young Count had expected to behold. The Monarch had recalled, for a moment or two, the princely and commanding air of his youth, and received the young Count with dignity and grace. His person was handsome, his figure fine, and his dress in the most exquisite taste that it was possible to conceive. It was neither so effeminate nor so overcharged with ornament as it sometimes was; and the black velvet slashed and laced with gold, the toque with a single large diamond on his head, the long snowy-white ostrich feather, and the collar of one or two high

orders round his neck, became him well, and harmonised with the air of dignity he assumed. There were two or three gentlemen who stood around him more gaudily dressed than himself, and amongst them was the Duke of Epernon, whom Charles of Montsoreau remembered to have seen at his father's château some years before. All, however, held back so as to allow the monarch a full view of the young cavalier, as he advanced.

"You are welcome to Vincennes, Monsieur de Logères," said the King. "Our noble and princely cousin of Guise has notified to us that he has sent you to Paris on business of importance; and, having given you that praise which we are sure you must merit, has besought us to put every sort of trust and confidence in you, and to listen to you as to himself, while you speak with us upon the affairs which have brought you hither. We beseech you, therefore, to inform us of that which he has left dark, and tell us how we may pleasure our fair cousin, which is always our first inclination to do — the good of our state and the welfare of our subjects considered."

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and his dress in the most unceremonic
ner, "his Highness the Duke of Gui
has sent me to your Majesty to ask infc
regarding a young lady, his near relati
he has reason to believe, was protected b
of your Majesty's troops in a situation
difficulty, for which protection the
most grateful. She was then, he un
conducted to this your Majesty's
Vincennes, doubtless for the purpose of
her a safe asylum till you could restore
Highness, who is her guardian."

Henry turned with a sneering smil
a dark but handsome man, with a
sinister expression of countenance, o
hand, saying, in an under tone, "Qui

enough for the young nobleman to hear the whole. He, of course, made no reply, as the words were not addressed to him; but waited, with his eyes bent down, apparently in thoughtful meditation, till the King should give him his answer.

"You have given us, Monsieur le Comte de Logères," said the King, "but a faint idea of this business; and, as unhappily the commanders of our troops are but too little accustomed to afford us any very full account of their proceedings, we are ignorant of the occasion on which any one of them rendered this service to the young lady you mention."

This affected unconsciousness, displayed absolutely in conjunction with a scarcely concealed knowledge of the whole affair, Charles of Montsoreau felt to be trifling and insulting: but he lost not his reverence for the kingly authority; and he replied, with every appearance of deference, "I had imagined, Sire, that the quick wings of rumour must have carried the whole particulars to your Majesty, otherwise I should have been more particular in my ac-

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Colombel."

"And pray what was the name of
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The young Count turned som
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the King's reply. "The young lac

King, turning to his minister. "You should know something of this affair?"

"Not more than your Majesty," replied Villequier, bowing low, and perceiving very clearly that Henry had maliciously wished to embarrass him.

The King smiled at the double-meaning answer, and then, turning to the young Count, replied, "Well, sir, you have fulfilled your mission, and may tell the Duke of Guise, our true and well-beloved cousin, that we will cause immediate inquiry and investigation to be made into the whole affair; and let him know the particulars as soon as we are sufficiently well-informed to speak upon it with that accuracy which becomes our character. You may retire."

This was of course not the conclusion of the affair to which Charles of Montsoreau was inclined to submit; and it was evident to him that the King and his minions presumed upon his apparent youth and inexperience. But there was a firm decision in his character which they

count. The service was rendered to the young lady very lately, between Jouarre and Gandelu. I am not absolutely aware of the name of the officer in command of the troops at the time, but one gentleman present bore the name of Colombel."

"And pray what was the name of the young lady herself?" demanded the King, with a sneer. "The Duke of Guise has many she relations, as we sometimes find to our cost. It could not be our pretty, mild, and virtuous friend, the Duchess of Montpensier, nor the delicate and fair-favoured Mademoiselle de St. Beuve; for the one is staying in Paris in disobedience to the orders of the King, and the other is remaining there, waiting for the tender consolations of the Chevalier d'Aumale."

The young Count turned somewhat red, both at the coarseness and the scornfulness of the King's reply. "The young lady," he answered, however, still keeping the same tone, "is named Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, daughter of the late Count de Clairvaut."

"Your first cousin, Villequier," said the

King, turning to his minister. "You should know something of this affair?"

"Not more than your Majesty," replied Villequier, bowing low, and perceiving very clearly that Henry had maliciously wished to embarrass him.

The King smiled at the double-meaning answer, and then, turning to the young Count, replied, "Well, sir, you have fulfilled your mission, and may tell the Duke of Guise, our true and well-beloved cousin, that we will cause immediate inquiry and investigation to be made into the whole affair; and let him know the particulars as soon as we are sufficiently well-informed to speak upon it with that accuracy which becomes our character. You may retire."

This was of course not the conclusion of the affair to which Charles of Montsoreau was inclined to submit; and it was evident to him that the King and his minions presumed upon his apparent youth and inexperience. But there was a firm decision in his character which they

were not prepared for; and after pausing for a moment in thought, during which time the King's brows began to bend angrily upon him, he raised his eyes, looking Henry calmly and stedfastly in the face, and replying, "Your Majesty must pardon me if I do not take instant advantage of your permission to retire, as you have conceived a false impression when you imagine that my mission is fulfilled."

The King looked with an air of astonishment, first to Epernon and then to Villequier: but the former turned away his head with a look of dissatisfaction; while the latter bit his lip, let his hand fall upon a jewelled dagger in his belt, and said nothing.

Charles of Montsoreau, however, went on in the same calm but determined tone. "His Highness the Duke of Guise," he said, "directed me to inform your Majesty of the facts I have mentioned, and to beg in general terms information regarding them; but in case the general information that I obtained was not sufficiently accurate to enable me to write to him distinctly that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut is in this place, or

in that place, he further directed me humbly to request that your Majesty would answer in plain terms the following plain questions: — Is Mademoiselle de Clairvaut in the château of Vincennes? Is she under the charge and protection of your Majesty? Does your Majesty know where she is?"

"By the Lord that lives," exclaimed Henry, "this Duke of Guise chooses himself bold ambassadors to his King!"

"Do you dare, malapert boy," exclaimed Villequier, "with that bold brow, to cross-question your sovereign?"

"I do dare, sir," answered Charles of Montsoreau, "to ask my sovereign, in the name of the Duke of Guise, these plain questions, which, as he is a just and noble monarch, he can neither find any difficulty in answering, nor feel any anger in hearing."

"And what if I refuse to answer, sir?" demanded the King. "What is to be the consequence then? Is the doughty messenger charged to make a declaration of war on the part of our obedient subject, the Duke of Guise?"

The young Count was not prepared for this question, and hesitated how to answer it, though a full knowledge of how terrible the Duke of Guise was to the weak and effeminate monarch he addressed, brought a smile over his countenance, which had in reality more effect than any words he could have spoken. After a pause, however, he replied, — "Oh no, Sire. The Duke of Guise is, as you say, your Majesty's most devoted and obedient subject; and never conceiving it possible that you would refuse to answer his humble questions, he gave me no instructions what to say in a case that he did not foresee. I can only suppose," he added, with a low and reverent bow to the King, "that the Duke will be obliged to come to Paris himself to make those inquiries and investigations, concerning his young relation, in which I have not been successful."

Charles of Montsoreau could see, notwithstanding the paint, which delicately furnished the King with a more stable complexion than his own, that at the very thought of the Duke of Guise coming to Paris the weak monarch

turned deadly pale. The same signs also were visible to Villequier, who whispered, "No fear, Sire; no fear; he will not come!"

The King answered sharply, however, and sufficiently loud for the young nobleman to hear, "We must give him no excuse, René! we must give him no excuse! Monsieur de Logères," he continued, putting on a more placable air than before, "we are glad to find that neither the Duke of Guise nor his envoy presumes to threaten us; and in consideration of the questions being put in a proper manner, we are willing to answer them to the best of our abilities."

Villequier, at these words, laid his hand gently upon the King's cloak; but Henry twitched it away from his grasp with an air of impatience, and continued, "I shall therefore answer you frankly and freely, young gentleman; telling you that the Lady whom you are sent to seek is in fact not at Vincennes; nor, to the best of our knowledge and belief, in our good city of Paris; neither do we know or have any correct information of where she may be

found, though it is not by any means to be denied that she has visited this our castle of Vincennes."

The first part of the King's speech had considerably relieved the mind of Villequier; but when he proceeded to make the somewhat unnecessary admission, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut had visited Vincennes, the minister again attempted to interrupt the King, saying, "You know, Sire, her pause at Vincennes was merely momentary, and absolutely necessary for those passports and safeguards without which it might be dangerous to travel, in the distracted state of the country."

"Perfectly true," replied Henry: but the King's apprehension of the Duke of Guise appearing in Paris was much stronger than his respect for his minister's opinion; and he proceeded with what he had to say, in spite of every sign or hint that could be given him.

"You must know, Monsieur de Logères," he said, "that, as I before observed, she did visit Vincennes for a brief space; but, there being something embarrassing in the whole business,

we were, to say the truth — albeit not insensible to beauty — we were not at all sorry to see her depart."

Although Charles of Montsoreau judged rightly that the abode of Vincennes, to the high and pure-minded girl whom he sought, could only have been one of horror, he could not conceive any thing in her situation which should have proved embarrassing to the King, and he answered bluntly, "Then your Majesty of course has caused her to be escorted in safety to the Duke of Guise, as the means of relieving yourself from all embarrassment concerning her."

"Not so, not so, Monsieur de Logères," replied the King. "Young diplomatists and young greyhounds run fast and overleap the game. It so happens that there are various claims regarding the wardship of this young Lady. She has many relations, as near or nearer than the Duke of Guise. The care and guidance of her, too, under the authorisation of the Duke himself, has been claimed by a young nobleman whom you may have heard

of, called the Marquis of Montsoreau;" and he fixed his eyes meaningly upon the young Count's face. "All these circumstances rendered the matter embarrassing; and as I was not called upon to decide the matter judicially; and the Lady, if not quite of an age by law to judge for herself, being very nearly so, I thought it far better to leave the whole business to her own discretion, and let her take what course she thought fit, offering her every assistance and protection in my power, which, however, she declined. You may therefore assure the Duke of Guise, on my part, that she is not at Vincennes, and that I am unacquainted with where she is at this moment. I now think, therefore, that all your questions are answered, and the business is at an end."

"I fear I must intrude upon your Majesty still farther," replied the young Count; "for besides the letter from the Duke of Guise, which I have had the honour of delivering to your Majesty, he has also furnished me with this document, giving me full power and authority to inquire, seek for, and require, at the

hands of any person in whose power she may be, the young Lady whom he claims as his ward. He has directed me to request your Majesty's approbation of the same, expressed by your signature to that effect, giving me authority to search for her in your name also, and to require the aid and assistance of all your officers, civil and military, in executing the said task."

Henry looked both agitated and angry; and Villequier spoke for a moment to Epernon behind the King's back.

"Monsieur de Logères," exclaimed the latter, taking a step forward, "this is too much. I can hardly suppose that his Highness the Duke of Guise has authorised you to make such a demand."

"My Lord Duke of Epernon," replied the Count, "were it not that I hold in my hand the Duke's authority for that which I state, I would call upon you to put your insinuation in plainer terms, that I might give it the lie as plainly as I would do any other unjust accusation."

The Duke turned very red; but he replied, "And you would be treated, sir Count, as a petty boy of the low nobility of this realm deserves, for using such language to one so much above yourself."

"There is no one in France so much above myself, sir," replied the Count, gazing on him sternly, and with a look of some contempt, "as to dare to insult me with impunity; and though you be now High-admiral of France, Colonel-general of Infantry, Governor of half the provinces of this country, Duke, Peer, and hold many another rich and honourable office besides, I tell you, John of Nogaret, that when the Baron de Caumont dined at my father's table, he sat nearer the salt than perhaps now may suit the proud Duke of Epernon to remember."

"Silence!" exclaimed the King, rousing himself for a moment from his effeminate apathy, while, for a brief space, an expression of power and dignity came over his countenance, such as that which had distinguished him while Duke of Anjou. "Silence, insolent boy!

Silence, Epernon! I forbid you, on pain of my utmost displeasure, to take notice, even by a word, of what this young man has said. You were yourself wrong to answer for the King in the King's presence. The Duke of Guise shall have no just occasion to complain of us," he added, the brightness which had come upon him gradually dying away like the false promising gleam of sunshine which sometimes breaks for a moment through a rainy autumnal day, and fades away again as soon, amidst the dull grey clouds; "the Duke of Guise shall have no occasion to complain of us. We will give this young man the authority which he has so insolently demanded, to seek for Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and having found her—if she have not joined the Duke of Guise long before — to escort her in safety to our cousin's care. But, Monsieur de Logères, you show your ignorance of every custom of the court and state, by supposing that the King of France can write down at the bottom of the powers given you by the Duke of Guise his name in confirmation of the same, like a steward at the bottom of a butcher's

bill. The authority which we give you must pass through the office of our secretary of state, and it shall be drawn out and sent to you as speedily as possible. I think that Monsieur de Villequier already knows where to send this authority. You may now retire; and rest assured that it shall reach you as soon as possible. At the same time we pardon you for your conduct in this presence, which much needs pardon, though it does not merit it."

Charles of Montsoreau bowed low, and retired from the King's presence, fully convinced that Henry was deceiving him; that he knew, or, at all events, had every means of judging, where Marie de Clairvaut was; and that he had not the slightest intention of sending him the authorisation he had promised, unless absolutely driven to do so.

The moment that the young Count had quitted the presence, the King turned angrily to Villequier, exclaiming, "Are you mad, Villequier, to risk bringing that fiery and ambitious pest upon us? 'T is but four days ago he was within ten miles of Paris!"

"Pshaw, Sire!" replied Villequier; "there is not the slightest chance of his coming. Did I not tell you when he was at Gonesse that I would find means to make him run like a frightened hare back again to Soissons? I fear your Majesty has ruined all our plans by promising this authority to that malapert youth, who doubtless already knows, or easily divines, that he is deceived."

"I have not deceived him," said the King: "I told him the girl was not at Vincennes; nor is she. I told him that I did not know where she is at this moment; nor do I; for she may be three miles on this side of Meulan, or three miles on that, for aught I know. It depends upon the quickness of the horses, and the state of the roads. I promised him the authority to seek her; and he shall have it in good due form, if he live long enough, and wait in Paris a sufficient time."

"If he have it not within three days," replied Villequier, "be you sure, Sire, that he will write to the Duke of Guise."

"But, Villequier," said the King in a soft

your affair. You seem to think that the
this girl falling into our hands is quite th
covery of a treasure which may fix on o
this young Marquis of Montsoreau an
crafty Abbé that you talk of, and I don't
how many more people besides. Now
you from the beginning that you should m
it all yourself: so look to it, good Ville
look to it."

"He has let me manage it all
truly!" said Villequier, in a low tone.
I wish to know more precisely, your Ma
he added aloud, "what am I to do wi
youth and the girl? Is he to have the au
ation, or not? Am I, or am I not, to g
up when he demands her?"

"Now, good faith," replied the King,

look or soft word addressed to her. He who has dealt with so many in his day, diplomatists and warriors and statesmen, has not wit enough to deal with a raw boy, whom, doubtless, our fair and crafty cousin of Guise has sent upon a fool's errand to get him out of the way."

"Certainly," replied the Duke of Epernon, "our wise friend Villequier seems to be somewhat prudent and cautious this morning. The young lady is in your hands, I think, Villequier; is she not? and you have sent her off into Normandy, I think you told me, with an escort of fifty of your archers. She goes there, doubtless, as his Majesty has said, with her own will and consent, and by her own choice, for there is a soft persuasiveness in fifty archers which it is very difficult for a woman's heart to resist; and, doubtless, by the same cogent arguments, you will induce her to marry whom you please. Come, tell us who it is to be; the hand of a rich heiress to dispose of, may be made a profitable thing, under such management as yours, Villequier."

The King laughed gaily, for Epernon's ordinary cupidity was no secret even monarch that fed it. But the Duke was to all jest upon that score; and looking lequier with the same sort of musing exp which he had before borne, he repeat question, saying, "Come, come, disint chevalier, tell us to whom do you intend her?"

"Perhaps to my own nephew," repli other. "What think you of that, Mon Duc?"

The brow of Epernon grew cloude moment. "I think," he said, "that y not do it, for two reasons: in the first you destine your nephew for your d Charlotte."

"Because you dare not," replied the Duc d'Epernon: and he added, speaking in a low tone, "You dare not, Villequier, mingle your race with that of Guise. The moment you do, your object will be clear, and your ruin certain."

"It is a curious thing, Sire," said Villequier, turning to the King with a smile, "it is a curious thing to see how my good Lord of Epernon grudges any little advantage to us mean men. However, to set his Grace's mind at ease, I neither destine Mademoiselle de Clairvaut for one nor for the other; but I think she may prove a wonderful good bait for the wild young Marquis of Montsoreau. By the promise of her hand, as far as my interest and influence is concerned, he will not only be bound to your Majesty's cause on every occasion, but will exert himself more zealously and potently for that, than any other inducement could lead him to do. Even if he should fail in the trial — for we must acknowledge that he shows himself somewhat unstable in his purposes — he will, at all events, have so far committed himself as to

think, in the first place, of how to
brother of his."

"No very difficult task, I shou
the Duke of Epernon, "for one
the art of catching gudgeons
quier."

"I don't know that," answer
"I would fain detach that youth,
Guises. You see, most noble
thinking of the King's interest
while you are thinking of you
ever, I must find a way to mana
their wonderful friend and tutor,
de Boisguerin, admitted to me l
are three means all powerful in
our neighbours — love, interest,
and we might thus exemplify i

used, which I wonder Monsieur de Villequier did not add," said the Duke, "as I rather expect he may have to use one or other of them on the present occasion; and men say he is fully as skilful in using them as in employing love, interest, or ambition, for his ends."

"Pray what are those?" demanded Villequier, somewhat sharply.

"Vicenza daggers," replied the Duke of Epernon, "and wine that splits a Venice glass!"

"Come, come, Epernon," cried the King, "you and Villequier shall not quarrel. Come away from him, come away from him, or you will be using your daggers on each other presently:" and, throwing his arm familiarly round his neck, he drew the Duke away.

CHARLES OF MONTSOREAU rode hon
painful and anxious thought: he hac
himself vainly, before he had proceed
cennes, that the redoubted name of
Guise would be found fully sufficie
diately to cause the restoration of
Clairvaut to him, who had natural
to protect her. It less frequently ha
youth fails to reckon upon the fiery co
is destined to meet with from adver
that it miscalculates the force of th
inert opposition which circumstances
offer to its eager course, throwing
heavy, slow, continual weight, wh
a powerful horse, see

in the way of impetuous youth, that we conquer and tame it sooner than by opposing it; and such had been his purpose with Charles of Montsoreau.

In his idle carelessness he cared but little what became of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, or into whose hands she fell. He was willing to countenance and assist the politic schemes of his favourite Villequier; and cared not, even in the slightest degree, whether that personage employed poison or the knife to rid himself of the young Count of Logères, provided always that he himself had nothing to do with it. The only part that he was inclined to act was to thwart the Duke's young envoy by obstacles and long delays; and this he had suffered to become so far evident to Charles of Montsoreau, that he became angry and impatient at the very prospect before him. He doubted, however, whether it would be right to send off a courier with this intelligence immediately to the Duke of Guise, or to wait for two or three days, in order to see whether the powers promised him were effectually granted; and he was still pondering

the matter, while riding through the streets of Paris, when, in passing by a large and splendid mansion in one of the principal streets, he caught a glimpse of two figures disappearing through the arched portal of the building. The faces of neither were visible to him; their figures only for a moment, and that at a distance. But he felt that he could not be mistaken — that all the thoughts and feelings and memories of youth could not so suddenly, so magically, be called up by the sight of any one but his brother, — and if so, that the other was the Abbé de Boisguerin.

"Whose is that house?" he exclaimed aloud, turning to his attendants.

"That of Monsieur René de Villequier," replied the page instantly; and, springing from his horse at the gate, the young Count knocked eagerly for admission. The portals were instanly thrown open, and a porter in crimson, with a broad belt fringed with gold, appeared in answer to the summons.

"I think," said the young Count, "that I saw this moment the Marquis de Montsoreau

and the Abbé de Boisguerin pass into this house."

The porter looked dull, and shook his head, replying, "No, sir; nobody has passed in here but two of my noble Lord's attendants — the old Abbé Scargilas, and Master Nicolas Prevôt, who used formerly to keep the Salle d'Armes, opposite the kennel at St. Germain."

Although Charles of Montsoreau knew the existence and possibility of such a thing as the lie circumstantial, yet the coolness and readiness of the porter surprised him. "Pray," he said, after a moment's pause, "is there any such person as either Monsieur de Montsoreau or the Abbé de Boisguerin dwelling here at present?"

"None, sir," replied the man. "There is no one here but the attendants of my Lord, who is at present absent with the King."

Charles of Montsoreau would have given a good deal to have searched the house from top to bottom; but as it would not exactly do to storm the dwelling of René de Villequier, he rode on, no less convinced than ever that his

once. That his brother was in rai
the hands of the most dangerous
triguing man of that day, he had r
and it seemed to him also clear, tha
were going on and contriving, of v
obstacles and delays thrown in his v
be, perhaps, a part. To what th
he could not, of course, tell directly
saw that the only hope of frustratin
in exertion without the loss of a mo
he accordingly dispatched his faithful
Gondrin to Soissons as soon as he r
inn.

We must follow, however, for a
the two persons whom the young
seen enter the hotel of Villequier, a
pany them at once into the chamb

tapestry that covered the walls. Another larger room opened beyond, and through the door of that again, which was partly open, a long suite of bed-rooms and other apartments were seen, with different rich and glittering objects placed here and there along the perspective, as if for the express purpose of catching the eye.

Into one of the large arm-chairs which the cabinet contained, the Marquis of Montsoreau threw himself as if familiar with the scene. "Villequier is long," he said, speaking to the Abbé. "He promised to have returned before this hour."

"Impatience, Gaspar, impatience," replied the Abbé, "is the vice of your disposition. How much have you lost already by impatience? Was it not your impatience which hurried me forward to represent his own situation and that of yourself, to your brother Charles, which drove him directly to the Duke of Guise? Was it not your impatience which made you speak words of love to Marie de Clairvaut before she was prepared to hear them, drawing from her a cold and icy reply? Was it not your impatience that made

and did not that very fact put us aln
mercy of the reiters, and give your l
opportunity of showing his gallantry
at our expense?"

"It is all true, my friend; it is all
plied the Marquis. "But in regard to
ing those fiery words to Marie de Clai
could I help that? Is it possible s
down the overflowing thoughts of our l
prevent their bursting forth when tl
taken off from the fountain, and when
of the heart gush out, not as from th
some ordinary river, but, like the wat
cluse, full, powerful, and abundant e
source."

"It was that I wished you to gua
replied the Abbé. "Had you appe

depend upon it, if she do so, she puts forth all her speed to insure herself against being caught. Unless you are very sure of your own speed and strength, you had better steal quietly onward, lest you frighten the deer. Had she heard much from my lips, and from those of her good but weak friend Madame de Saulny, of your high qualities, and of all those traits in your nature calculated to captivate and attract such a being as herself, while you seemed indifferent and somewhat cool withal, every thing good that is in her nature would have joined with every thing that is less good — the love of high qualities and of manly daring would have combined with vanity and caprice to make her seek you, excite your attention, and court your love."

"I have never yet seen in her," said the young Marquis, "either vanity or caprice; and besides, good friend, such things to me at least are not matters of mere calculation. I act upon impulses that I cannot resist. Mine are feelings, not reasonings: I follow where they lead

me, and even in the pursuit acquire intense pleasure that no reasoning could give."

"True," replied the Abbé, bending down his head and answering thoughtfully. "There is a great difference between your age and mine, Gaspar. You are at the age of passions, and at that period of their sway when they defeat themselves by their own intensity. I had thought, however, that my lessons might have taught you, my counsel might have shown you, that with any great object in view it is necessary to moderate even passion in the course, in order to succeed in the end."

"But there is joy in the course also," exclaimed Gaspar de Montsoreau. "Think you, Abbé, that even if it were possible to win the woman we love by another's voice, we could lose the joy of winning her for ourselves — the great, the transcendant joy of struggling for her affection, even though it were against her coldness, her indifference, or her anger?"

"I think, Gaspar," replied the Abbé, "that if to a heart constituted as yours is, there be added a mind of equal power, nothing — not even

the strongest self-denial — will be impossible for the object of winning her you love. But I am not a good judge of such matters," he continued with a slight smile curling his lip — a smile not altogether without pride. "I am no judge of such matters. The profession which I have chosen, and followed to a certain point, excludes them from my consideration. All I wish to do in the present instance is to warn you, Gaspar, against your own impetuosity in dealing with this Villequier. Be warned against that man! be careful! Promise him nothing; commit yourself absolutely to nothing, unless upon good and sufficient proof that he too deals sincerely with you. He is not one to be trusted, Gaspar, even in the slightest of things; and promise me not to commit yourself with him in any respect whatsoever."

"Oh, fear not, fear not," replied the Marquis. "In this respect at least, good friend, no passions hurry me on. Here I can deal calmly and tranquilly, because, though the end is the same, I have nothing but art to encounter, which may always be encountered by reason. When

I am with her, Abbé, it is the continual strife of passion that I have to fear; at every word, at every action, I have to be upon my guard; and reason, like a solitary sentinel upon the walls of a city attacked on every side, opposes the foes in vain at one point, while they pour in upon a thousand others."

While he was yet speaking, a servant with a noiseless foot entered the room, and in a low sweet tone informed the Marquis, that Monsieur de Villequier had just returned from Vincennes, and desired earnestly to speak with him, for a moment, *alone* in his own cabinet. The word "alone" was pronounced more loud than any other, though the whole was low and tuneful; for Villequier used to declare that he loved to have servants with feet like cats and voices like nightingales.

The Abbé marked that word distinctly, and was too wise to make the slightest attempt to accompany his former pupil. The Marquis, however, did not remark it; and, perhaps a little fearful of his own firmness and skill, asked his friend to accompany him. But the

Abbé instantly declined. "No, Gaspar," he said, "no; it were better that you should see Monsieur Villequier alone. I will wait for you here;" and, turning to the table, he took up an illuminated psalter, and examined the miniatures with as close and careful an eye as if he had been deeply interested in the labours of the artist.

He saw not a line which had there been drawn; but after the Marquis had followed the servant from the room he muttered to himself, "So, Monsieur de Villequier, you think that I am a mean man, who may be over-reached with impunity and ease? You know me not yet, but you shall know me, and that soon." And laying down the psalter, he took up another book of a character more suited to his mind at the moment, and read calmly till his young friend returned, which was not for near an hour.

In the mean time the Marquis had proceeded to the cabinet of Villequier, who, the moment he saw him, rose from the chair in which he had been seated busily writing, and pressed him warmly by the hand.

"My dear young friend," he said, "one learns to love the more those in whose cause one suffers something; and, since I saw you, I have had to fight your battle manfully."

"Indeed! and may I ask, my Lord, with whom?" demanded the young Marquis.

"With many," answered Villequier. "With the King,—with Epernon,—with your own brother."

"With my brother?" exclaimed Gaspar of Montsoreau, while the blood rushed up in his face. "Does he dare to oppose me after all his loud professions of disinterestedness and generosity? But where is he, my Lord? Leave me to deal with him. Where does he dwell? Is he in Paris?"

Villequier smiled, but so slightly, that it did not attract the eyes of his companion. That smile, however, was but the announcement of a sudden thought that had passed through his own mind.

Shrewd politicians like himself, fertile in all resources, and unscrupulous about any, feel a pride and pleasure in their own abundance of

expedients, which makes the conception of a new means to their end as pleasant as the finding of a diamond. On the present occasion the subtle courtier thought to himself with a smile, as he saw the angry blood mount into the cheek of the young Marquis of Montsoreau at the very mention of his brother's name, — "Here were a ready means of ridding ourselves, were it needful, of one if not both of these young rash-headed nobles, by setting them to cut each other's throats."

It suited not his plan however at the moment to follow out the idea, and he consequently replied, "No, no, Monsieur de Montsoreau. I should take no small care, seeing how justly offended you are with your brother, to prevent your finding out his abode, as I know what consequences would ensue. But in all probability, by this time, he has gone back to the Duke of Guise, having with difficulty been frustrated, for the King was much inclined to yield to his demands."

"What did he demand?" exclaimed the Marquis vehemently. "What did he dare to

demand, after the professions he made to me at La Ferté?"

"That matters not," answered Villequier. "Suffice it that his demands were such as would have ruined all your hopes for ever."

"But why should the King support his demands," said the Marquis, "when well assured of how attached he is to the great head of the League that tyrannises over him?"

"Hush, hush!" said Villequier. "The League only tyrannises so long as the King chooses. Henry wields not the sword at present, but the sword is still in his hands to strike when he thinks fit. But to answer your question, my young friend. The King knows well, as you say, that your brother is attached to the Duke of Guise: but you must remember at the same time, Monsieur de Montsoreau, that as yet he is not fully assured that you are attached to himself. Nay, hear me out, hear me out! The King's arguments, I am bound to say, were not only specious but reasonable. He had to consider, on the one hand, that the Duke of Guise, with whom it is his strongest interest to

keep fair, demands this young lady as his ward, which, according to the laws of the land, Henry has no right to refuse. Your brother, on the Duke's part, threatens loudly; and what have I to oppose to a demand to which it seems absolutely necessary in good policy that the King should yield? Nothing; for, on the other hand, Henry affirms that he can be in no degree sure of yourself; that your family for long have shown attachment for the House of Guise; that you yourself were upon your march to join the Duke, when this lady, falling into the hands of the King's troops, induced you to abandon your purpose for the time; but that the moment he favours your suit, or gives his consent to your union with her, you may return to your former attachments, and purchase the pardon and good will of the Duke of Guise by returning to his faction."

"I am incapable of such a thing!" exclaimed the Marquis vehemently: but the recollection of his abandonment of the Duke's party came over him with a glow of shame, and he remained for a moment or two without making

" I believe you are incapable of it,
de Montsoreau, and so I assured
He, however, still urged upon me t
no proof, and that you had taken r
engagement to serve his Majesty.
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non, who, I believe, wishes for the h
young lady for some of his own re
order to arrange for himself such
with the House of Guise as may pr
guard to him in the hour of need."
Villequier smiled at his own art in tu
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the Duke had expressed in regard to

The warning of the Abbé de
however, at that moment rang in
Gaspar of Montsoreau, and he rou
to deal with Villequier not exactly a

sword and fortune to his service; and I am to understand, through you, that he holds out to me the hope of obtaining the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut in return. Now, it was not at all my purpose to take any part in the strifes that are agitating the country at this moment. I am neither Leaguer nor Huguenot, nor Zealot nor Moderate; and, though most loyal, not what is called Royalist. I was merely conducting Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, with a very small force, not the tenth part of what I can bring into the field at a week's notice, when the events took place which brought me to Paris. Now, Monsieur, if the King does not rest satisfied with my expressions of loyalty, and desires some express and public engagement to his service, I see no earthly reason why I should rest satisfied with mere vague hopes of obtaining the hand of the lady I love; and though, of course, I cannot deal with his Majesty upon equal terms, yet I must demand some full, perfect, and permanent assurance that I am not to be disappointed in my hopes,

before I draw my sword for one party or another."

Villequier gazed thoughtfully in his face for a moment or two, biting his under lip, and saying internally, "The Abbé de Boisguerin—this comes from him." His next thought was, "Shall I endeavour to pique this stripling upon his honour, and generosity, and loyalty, and all those fine words?" But he rejected the idea the moment after thinking. "No; that would do better with his brother. When a man boldly leaps over such things, it is insulting him to talk about them any more."

And after a moment's farther thought, he replied, "It is all very fair, Monsieur de Montsoreau, that you should have such assurances; though, if we were not inclined to deal straightforwardly with you in the matter, we might very very easily refuse every thing of the kind, and leave you not in the most pleasant situation."

"How so?" demanded the Marquis with some alarm. "How so?"

"Easily, my dear young friend," replied Villequier. "Thus: by informing you that the

King could give you no such assurance — which, indeed, is nominally true, though not really — and by showing you, at the same time, that as the young lady is in his Majesty's hands, and he is determined not to give her up to the Duke of Guise or to any body else, but some tried and faithful friend, the only means by which you can possibly obtain her is by serving the King voluntarily, in the most devoted manner. Suppose this did not suit you, what would be your resource? If you go to the Duke of Guise, you find the ground occupied before you by your brother, and the Duke accuses you of having betrayed his young relation into the hands of the King — perhaps sends you under a guard into Lorraine, and has you tried, and your head struck off. Such things have happened before now, Monsieur de Montsoreau. At all events, not the slightest chance exists of your winning the fair heiress of Clairvaut from him. But, even if you did gain his consent, she is still in the hands of the King, who would certainly not give her up to one who had proved himself a determined enemy."

that he could not well adopt, and,
showing of Villequier, he fancied
less power and consequence in the n
he really was. He resolved, howev
admit the fact if he could help it.

"Suppose, Monsieur de Villequier
"that the League were to prevail, a
his Majesty to concede all the article
think you not that one thing ex
him might well be, to yield Made
Clairvaut to her lawful guardian?"

"It might," answered Villequier i
"But then I come in. The question
ship has never been tried betwee
and myself. I stand as nearly relat
he does; and I should instantly bri
before the Parliament, demandir

"I did not know," said the young nobleman, "that the relationship was so near, though I was aware that Clairvaut is the family name of Villequier. However, sir, there is yet another alternative. Suppose I were to keep the sword in the sheath, and retire once more to Montsoreau."

"Why there, then," replied Villequier with a slight sneer, "you might happily abide, watching the progress of events, till either the royalist party or the League prevailed; and then, as chance or accident might will it, see the hand of the fair Lady rewarding one of the King's gallant defenders, or bestowed by the Duke of Guise upon his brave and prudent partisan, the Count of Logères."

He paused for a moment or two, to let all he said have its full effect, and then added, in a familiar tone, "Come, come, Monsieur de Montsoreau, see the matter in its true light. There is no possible chance of your obtaining the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, except by attaching yourself to the King's service, and defending the royal cause with the utmost zeal.

If you persist in doing so simply as a voluntary act to be performed or remitted at pleasure, be you sure that as you make the King depend upon your good will for your services towards him, so will you be made to depend upon his good will, his caprices if you like, for the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. If, however, on the contrary, you frankly and generously determine to take service with the King, and bind yourself irrevocably to his cause, I do not scruple to promise you, under his hand, his full consent to your union with Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. I will give you the same consent under mine, assuming the title of her guardian. Your marriage cannot, of course, take place till the great struggle that is now impending is over. In a few months, nay, in a few weeks, the one party or the other — who are now directing their efforts against each other, instead of turning, as they ought, their united forces against the common enemies of our religion — must have triumphed over its adversary. I need not tell you which I feel, which I know, must be successful; but your part will now be, to exert

yourself to the utmost, to traverse the country with all speed to Montsoreau, to raise every soldier that you can, and to gather every crown that you can collect, to join the King with all your forces, wherever he may be, and, by your exertions, to render that result certain, which is, indeed, scarcely doubtful even as it is; remembering that upon the destruction of the Duke of Guise's party, and upon the overthrow of his usurped and unreasonable power, depends not only the welfare of your King and master, but the realisation of your best and sweetest hopes."

"You grant all that I demand, Monsieur de Villequier," replied Gaspar of Montsoreau. "All I wish is the King's formal consent in writing, and yours, to my marriage with Marie de Clairvaut, as the condition of my absolute and public adhesion to the royal cause."

"I know," replied Villequier, "that I grant all you demand, and I was prepared to do so from the first, only we were led into collateral discussions as we went on. You will, of course,

take an oath to the King's service, and confirm it under your hand."

"We will exchange the papers, Monsieur de Villequier," replied the Marquis, thinking himself extremely cautious. . "But now, pray tell me, how ended the discussion with my brother?"

"The only way that it could end," replied Villequier, "when all parties were determined to evade his demand. The King, you may easily suppose, was not inclined to give the young heiress of Clairvaut to any of the partisans of an enemy. Epernon knew well that if the hand of a Guise were upon her shoulder, the ring of a La Valette would never pass upon her finger; and I, when last we met, had half given my promise to you, and was, at all events, determined that the question of wardship should be settled before I parted with her. The King, therefore, evaded the demands of the young Count, though he was not a little inclined to yield to them at one time, in order to pacify the Duke of Guise. However, I took the brunt of the business upon myself, and underwent the

hot indignation of your brother, who thought to find in me an Epernon, or a Montsoreau, who would measure swords with him for an angry word."

"They had better be skilful as well as brave," said the young Marquis thoughtfully, "who measure swords with my brother Charles."

"Indeed!" said Villequier, "is he then so much a master of his weapon?"

"The most perfect I ever beheld—ay, more skilful now, than even our friend the Abbé de Boisguerin; though I have heard that, some years ago, when the Abbé was studying at Padua, he challenged the famous Spanish sword-player, Bobéz, to display his skill with him in the schools, in single combat, and hit him three times upon the heart without Bobéz touching him once."

"I remember, I remember!" cried Villequier. "The master broke the buttons from the swords in anger, and the student ran him through the body at the first pass, whereof he died within five minutes after in the Deacon's chamber."

"I never heard that he died," replied the Marquis with some surprise.

"He did indeed, though," replied Villequier with a meditative air. "And so this was the Abbé de Boisguerin. One would have thought the army, rather than the church, would have called such a spirit to itself."

"I know not," replied the young Marquis, "but in all things he is equally skilful; and, doubtless, you know he has taken but the first step towards entering the church, pausing as it were even on the threshold."

"Do you think," said Villequier, "that he is as skilful in conveying intelligence as in other things?"

"What do you mean, my Lord?" exclaimed his young companion.

"Nay, I mean nothing," replied the politician," satisfied with having sown the first seed ofsuspicion in the young nobleman's mind, without, perhaps, any definite design, but simply for the universal purpose of making men doubt and distrust each other, with a view of ruling them more easily. "Nothing, except a mere question

concerning his skill. I have no latent meaning, I assure you."

The brow of the Marquis grew clear again, and Villequier saw that he believed the latter assertion more fully than he had intended. He let the subject pass, however, and spoke of many other things, giving his own account of various matters which had occurred during the Count de Logères's audience of the King, and urging Gaspar de Montsoreau to set off with all speed to raise his forces in his native province. Then abruptly turning the conversation, he demanded, "You or the Abbé told me, I think, that you suspected your brother of having communicated your march to the reiters. Is it like his general character so to act? I'm sure, if it be his custom to do such things, I would much rather that he was upon the opposite party than our own."

The Marquis bent down his head, and gazed sternly upon the ground for two or three moments. He then answered, with a deep sigh, "No, Monsieur de Villequier; no, it is not like Charles's character. He has all his life

been frank and free as the summer air, open, and generous. I fear I did him wrong to suspect him. We are rivals where no man admits of rivalry: but I must do him justice. If he have done such a thing, his nature must be changed, changed indeed — changed, perhaps, as much as my own."

"I thought," replied Villequier, "that he seemed frank and straightforward enough, bold and haughty as a lion; gave the King look for look; bearded Epernon, and threatened to bring him to the field; and spared not me myself, whom men don't for some reason love to offend. But he did not seem a man likely to betray his friend, or practise treachery upon his brother. It is a very strange thing, too," he continued in an easier tone, "that Colombel and the other officers of the King's troops at Château Thierry should have received news of your coming a day before you did cross the Marne, together with the information that the reiters might attack you near Gandelu. Was not this strange?"

"Most strange," replied the Marquis, knit-

ting his brows, and setting his teeth hard. But Villequier, now seeing that he had said quite enough, again turned the conversation; and after letting it subside naturally to ordinary subjects, he told the young Marquis that he would immediately write to the King, and obtain his signature to the paper required, before bed-time. "It is late already," he said; "I think even now I see a shade in the sky, so I must about my work rapidly. But remember, Monsieur de Montsoreau, nine is my supper hour exactly; and then, care and labour being past, we will sit down and enjoy ourselves, though I fear the accommodation which I can offer you in my poor dwelling must seem but rude in your eyes."

The Marquis said all that such a speech required, and then withdrew.

When he was gone, Villequier applied himself for some time to other things; but when they were concluded, he rose from his chair, and walked once or twice thoughtfully across the cabinet.

"I had better," he said to himself at length,

"I had better deal with him at once, and then I can ascertain what are his demands, and how to treat them."

Thus saying, he took up his bell and rang it, directing the servant who appeared to see if he could find the Abbé de Boisguerin alone, in which case he was to invite him to a conference. "He will be alone," thought the wily courtier, "for I have sown seeds of those things which will not suffer them to be long together."

The Abbé, however, was absent from the house, much to the surprise of Villequier; and another hour had well nigh passed before he made his appearance. The moment that he did so, he advanced towards Villequier with his mild and graceful calmness, saying that he understood his Lordship had sent for him. Villequier pressed his hand tenderly, and with soft and courtly words assured him that, in sending for him, he had only sought to enjoy the pleasure of his unrivalled conversation for a few minutes before supper.

The Abbé replied exactly in the same tone; that he was profoundly grieved to have lost even

a moment of the society of one who fascinated from the first, and sent away every one charmed and delighted.

A slight and bitter smile curled the lip of each as he ended his speech, like a seal upon a treaty, the confirmation and mockery of a falsehood.

The Abbé, however, added to his speech a few words more, saying that he should have been back earlier, but that his conversation at the White Penitent's had been so interesting that he could not withdraw himself earlier from her Majesty the Queen-mother.

Villequier started. "Are you acquainted with the Queen?" he said. "What a surprising being Catherine is!"

"She is indeed," answered the Abbé. "My long sojourn at Florence some years ago made me fully acquainted with every member of the House of Medici, and I now bring you this letter on her part, Monsieur de Villequier."

Villequier took the paper that the Abbé handed to him, and read apparently with some surprise. "Her Majesty," he said, "knows

thing to serve and assist you, and evil machinations against you."

"Oh, she doubts it not; she do replied the Abbé. "She doubts i sieur de Villequier, any more thar has written this note only in con your good intentions towards me. there is one thing I wish you to Monsieur de Villequier."

"Name it, my dear friend," ex Marquis; "but give me an opp making myself happy in gratifying

"The fact is, Monsieur de Vill plied the Abbé, "that some mali has been endeavouring to persuad Marquis de Montsoreau, my frie merly my pupil, that it was I who the reiters the course we were

of coming up to rescue us and bring us hither — though they showed no great activity in doing the first. Now, doubtless, the person who did this, if there were any one, had the King's service solely in view, and deserved to be highly rewarded, as he probably will be; but ——"

"Doubtless," replied Villequier with a sneering smile. "But surely he could not object to such honourable service being known."

"Of course not," replied the Abbé; "nor that he had given intimation of the facts to, and taken his measures with, her Majesty the Queen-mother; by an order, under whose hand the troops at Château Thierry acted, and at whose suggestion Monsieur de Montsoreau and his friends threw themselves into the hands of Monsieur de Villequier. — All this her Majesty declares he did; and he could not, of course, object to any of these things being known, except as it is contrary to good policy and to the wishes of the Queen-mother: and more especially contrary to every wise purpose, if he be a person possessed of much habitual influence with the young Marquis."



as any well-trained hound, — the Seez is at present vacant. I kno would fill it better than the Ab guerin."

The Abbé drew himself up an hand. "You mistake me entirel de Villequier," he said. "I take n I have taken too many already; a God's grace and the good will father the Pope, I intend to get speedily. I have nothing to req Lordship at present. I know, see stand your whole policy, and thin right in every respect. The pro you and the King are to give to Montsoreau concerning the hand selle de Clairvaut can of course

"Doubtless," replied the Abbé, "doubtless: but they can be broken?"

"Of course," replied Villequier; "of course any thing on earth can be broken."

"That is sufficient," replied the Abbé. "It is quite enough, Monsieur de Villequier: I only desire to know, whether you and the King consider it as a final arrangement, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut is to marry the young Lord of Montsoreau, or whether the matter is not now as much unsettled and within your own power and grasp as ever."

"Why," replied Villequier thoughtfully, "it is, as I dare say you well know, Monsieur l'Abbé, a very difficult thing indeed to devise any sort of black lines, which, written down upon sheep skin, will prove sufficiently strong to bind the actions of kings, princes, or common men, at a future period. But it seems to me, Monsieur l'Abbé, that the time is come when we had better be frank with each other! What is it that you aim at? You seem not displeased to think the arrangement doubtful or



prompted the demand for a decisive bargain."

"I did," replied the Abbé.

asked to see him alone, I was very
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for its substance and object; name
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we all set out upon different roads to reach it. My purpose is to serve his Majesty and the Queen-mother far more than I have hitherto been able to do. What I have done is a trifle; but if I detach from the party of the League, separate for ever from the Duke of Guise, and bring over to the royal cause Charles of Montsoreau as well as his brother, I shall confer no trifling service, for I can now inform you, Monsieur de Villequier, that, besides the great estates of Logères, he is lord of all the possessions lately held by the old Count de Morly, who amassed much treasure during the avaricious part of age, and died little more than a week ago, leaving this young Lord the heir of all his wealth. I have received the intelligence this very morning; so that, what between his riches, his skill, and his courage, he is worth any two, excepting Epernon perhaps, of the King's court."

"If you do what you say, Monsieur de Boisguerin," replied the Marquis in a low, deep, sweet-toned voice, you may command any thing you please in France, bishoprics, abbeys ——"



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the promise given to his brother

"Indeed!" said Villequier. "He is now in Paris; the trial could be speedily made."

"I know it—" replied the Abbé, seeing the Marquis fix his eyes upon him eagerly, thinking, perhaps, 'he has promised more than he could perform.'

"I know it, and that is the precise reason why I have hurried on this matter, and urged it to the present point. No time is to be lost, or I see storms approaching, Monsieur de Villequier, that I think escape your eyes."

"What do you intend to do?" demanded Villequier; "and what means do you require to do it?"

"My purposes I have already told you," replied the Abbé. "The means I require — to come to the point at once — consist of a document under your own hand, making over to me, as far as your relationship to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut goes, the right of disposing of her hand in marriage to whomsoever I may think fit: that is to say, the voice for, or the voice against, any particular candidate for her hand, when given by me, is to be held as if given by yourself."

"This is a great thing that you demand, Monsieur de Boisguerin," replied Villequier, gazing in his face with no inconsiderable surprise; "and I see not how I can give such a paper at the very same time that I give the one which I have promised to the Marquis of Montsoreau."

"Nothing, I fear, can be done without it," replied the Abbé; "but I think it may be done without risk or exposure of any kind, for I in return can bind myself not to employ that paper for nine months, by which time all will be complete; and in both the documents you can speak vaguely of other promises and engagements, and can declare your great object in giving me that paper to be, the final settlement of difficult claims, by a person in whom you have full confidence."

Villequier looked in his face with a meaning and somewhat sarcastic smile: then turned to the note which the Queen-mother, Catharine de Medici, had sent him; read it over again as if carelessly, but marking every word as he did so; and then said, with somewhat of a sigh, "Well, Monsieur de Boisguerin, pray draw up on that paper what you think would be required."

The Abbé took up the pen and ink, and wrote rapidly for a moment or two; while Villequier looked over his shoulder, fingering the hilt of his dagger as he did so, in a manner which might have made the periods of any man but the Abbé de Boisguerin, who knew as he did his companion's habits and views, less rounded and eloquent than they usually were. The Abbé, however, wrote on without the slightest sign of apprehension, and at length Villequier exclaimed, "That would tie my hands sufficiently tight, Monsieur de Boisguerin."

"Not quite, my Lord," replied the other. "I never make a covenant without a penalty; and what I am now going to add provides that, in case of your failing to confirm my decision, or attempting in any way to rescind this paper and the power hereby given to me, you forfeit to my use and benefit one hundred thousand golden crowns, to be sued for from you in any lawful court of this kingdom."

"Nay, nay, nay!" cried Villequier, now absolutely laughing. "This is going too far, Monsieur de Boisguerin."

"Faith, not a whit, my Lord," replied the Abbé. "I take care when men make me promises, that they are not such as can be trifled with, at least if I am to act upon them."

"Why, you do not suppose——" exclaimed Villequier.

"I suppose nothing, my Lord," interrupted the Abbé, "but that you are a statesman and a courtier, and must in your day have seen more than one promise broken."

"By some millions," replied Villequier. "I told you to speak frankly, Monsieur de Boisguerin, and you have done so with a vengeance. I must have my turn, too, and tell you that neither to you nor any other man on earth will I give such a promise, without in the first place seeing a probability of the object for which it is given being accomplished, and, in fact, some steps taken towards the accomplishment of that object; and, in the next place, without having a distinct notion of the means by which it is to effect its end. That is a beautiful ring of yours," continued the statesman, suddenly breaking away from the subject as if to announce that

what he had just said was final, but perhaps in reality to consider what was to be the next step. "That is a beautiful ring of yours, Monsieur de Boisguerin, and of some very peculiar stone it seems; a large turquoise semi-transparent."

"It is an antidote against all poisons," answered the Abbé coolly, "whether they be eaten in the savoury ragout, drunk in the racy cup, smelt in the odour of a sweet flower, or inhaled in the balmy air of some well-prepared apartment. My dear friends will not find me so tender a lamb as Jeanne d'Albret."

"No, I should think not," replied Villequier with a laugh, and still holding off from the original subject of conversation. "I should think not, if I may judge by some of your attendants, Monsieur de Boisguerin, for there is one of them at least, an Italian, whom I passed in the court but now, who looks much more like the follower of a wolf than of a lamb. He was dressed somewhat in the guise of a wandering minstrel, with a good strong dagger, which I dare say is serviceable in time of need."

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"But," said Villequier, "if you l
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the Abbé. "I knew him long a
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cursion a week or a fortnight before. He had on the first occasion seen and recognised me, and he now came back, having spent all the money he had gained by selling a young Italian pipe-player to my good cousin Charles, and being consequently in not the best provided state. He was in hopes that I would take him into my service, which, from ancient recollection of his character, I was very willing to do; dismissing, however, without much ceremony, another man and a low Italian woman whom he had brought with him. They seemed very willing to go, it is true, and he to part with them; and my good friend Orbi has already shown himself on more than one occasion fully as serviceable as I had expected he would prove. My former knowledge of him gives me means of binding him to me by very strong ties; and I will acknowledge that never was there man to all appearance so well calculated to remove a troublesome friend or a pertinacious enemy."

"Doubtless, doubtless," replied Villequier; "though he seems not to be particularly strong in frame."



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The letter was brought hither not two hours ago. Now, ere two hours more be over, you shall yourself see the whole feelings of this young man changed, and the pursuit renewed as eagerly as ever. If it be so, what say you? Will you go forward in the way I propose? — Yea or nay, Monsieur de Villequier? I trifle not, nor am trifled with."

"I will then go forward, beyond all doubt," replied the Marquis.

The Abbé thereupon took up the pen, wrote five lines on a sheet of paper, sealed them with some of the yellow wax which lay ready, addressed the note to Charles of Montsoreau, and placing it in the hands of Villequier, bade him to send it by a page, with orders to require an answer. The page seemed winged with the wind, and in a marvellous short time he returned, bearing a note from the young Count of Logères, containing these few words: —

"My renunciation was entirely conditional. If it be as you say, nothing on earth shall induce me to yield the hand of Mademoiselle

de Clairvaut to any man. The time that you allow me for writing does not permit me to say more, but come to me as early as possible to-morrow, and let all things be explained; for a state of doubt and suspicion was always to me worse than the knowledge of real evil or real wrong."

The Abbé gave it to Villequier, and the Minister only replied by signing and sealing the paper which the Abbé had drawn up.

"Now, quick! Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Minister. "Go for a few minutes to your own apartments, and then join us at supper, which I hear is already served, as if we had not met during the evening. You will not need your ring, I can assure you."

The Abbé bowed low and retired in silence; but in his heart he said, "And this, the fool Henry holds to be a great politician."

No knave can be a great politician; but every knave thinks himself so. The mistake they make is between wisdom and cunning. The knave prides himself on deceiving others, the wise man on not deceiving himself.

CHAP. VI.

When the Abbé de Boisguerin on the following morning entered the presence of Charles of Montsoreau, his mind was prepared for every thing he was to say and do, for every thing he was to assert or to imply. But there was one thing for which his mind was not prepared — all shrewd, keen, politic, and experienced as it was.

There are points in the deep study of human nature which those who would use that mighty science for selfish purposes almost always overlook. Amongst these are the changes, both sudden and progressive, which take place in themselves and in others, and the changes in relative situations which they produce. In this respect it was that the Abbé de Boisguerin, thoughtful and calculating as he was, had not prepared himself for the meeting



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pupil was so powerfully intellectual, that the Abbé felt he must be more cautious and careful than he had prepared to be; that his words, his thoughts, and his looks would not alone be tested by old affection, nor even by the simple powers of an undoubting mind, but would be tried by experience likewise, and tried moreover with that degree of suspicion which is more active within us when we first learn the painful lessons taught by human deceit, than it is when we learn fully our own powers of separating truth from falsehood.

He saw that it would be necessary to be more cautious than he had proposed to be, and that, consequently, he must change much that he had intended to say and do. The very caution affected his manner, and his alteration of purposes caused occasional hesitation. Charles of Montsoreau, who remembered his whole character and demeanour during many years, found, without seeking it, a touchstone in the past by which to try the present, and the conclusion in his own heart was, "This man is not true."

The explanation given by the Abbé of all that had occurred on their route did not satisfy his hearer. He told him that he had remained with Mademoiselle de Clairvaut and the carriage till the reiters had passed, and then had caused the horses to be turned into a bye-road, in the hope of escaping any returning parties: they had thus accidentally met with the King's troops, whose offered protection, of course, they could not refuse. But he touched vaguely and lightly upon the mission of Colombel to the young Marquis de Montsoreau; and the Count de Logères did not press him upon the subject, for he felt sufficiently upon his guard, and had a repugnance openly to convict one whom he had loved of falseness and treachery.

He turned then to the note which he had received on the preceding evening.

"You tell me now," he said, "Abbé, that you have some reason to believe that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, as I at first supposed, has seen my affection, and did not intend to discourage it. What are those reasons?"

The Abbé stated vaguely that some words,

dropped by Madame de Saulny, had produced that belief in his mind.

Charles of Montsoreau mused, and made no answer. The time had been when he would have replied at once, and have discussed the question fully with his former preceptor; but now he held counsel with his own heart in his own bosom, and said, "This man has some object in telling me this. Her own words were sufficiently conclusive, that she did not see, that she did not remark, the signs of affection which I had fancied undoubted."

He still maintained silence, however, towards the Abbé, in regard to his own views, his own purposes, and his own feelings. Nor could the other, though he used all his skill, draw from him the slightest indication of what he intended to do, except that he waited in Paris for the arrangement of some affairs, which were not yet concluded, with the King. He in turn, however, questioned the Abbé much concerning his brother, expressing not only a wish but a determination to see him.

"I am happy," he said, "that my letter

the fact of your being in the house. could shake my own belief that it and yourself I had seen, and as I and the page confirmed my opinio letter at all risks: and now, good love Gaspar and myself as you use trive that we may meet again t order that all these clouds may be from between us, and that we may l as brothers ought to feel towards e

The Abbé promised to do a Count desired, beseeching him, he press his brother to an interview and assuring him that he wou effort.

The still more important subje become of Mademoiselle de Clair

him, and would only endeavour, in the course of any conversation upon that point, to discover what were his secret intentions, even while he concealed from him the true circumstances.

It was as he expected. The Abbé told him that, in some degree under the care, and in some degree under the guard, of the King's troops, the whole party had been brought to the neighbourhood of Paris, where a messenger from the monarch had conveyed to himself and the young Marquis an invitation to take up their abode at the house of Villequier, while Mademoiselle de Clairvaut was conveyed to Vincennes. They had done all that was possible, he said, to prevent such a separation; but the King's commands were peremptory; and he had since learnt, or at least had reason to believe, that the young lady had been sent in the direction of Beauvais, to the care of some distant relations.

The young Count smiled, and said nothing; and the Abbé then, with an air of grave sincerity, proceeded to ask him what had best be done under such circumstances. He replied that he



Finding that no indirect mean
Abbé, trusting to their former f
the question directly, "What c
do in this business, Charles."

"Indeed, my dear Abbé," re
Count, "it is difficult to tell y
definite plan of action at pres
guided by circumstances as the

Thus ended their interview;
a strange contrast to that bet
and Villequier, — showing how
may often baffle cunning whicl
against astuteness like itself.
day passed without any commu
ing the young Count, either
or from his brother, from the
Duke of Guise; and expectati

and to demand peremptorily the fulfilment of the promise which the King had made. Ere he set out, however, he received a note in the hand of the Abbé de Boisguerin, informing him briefly that his brother, having determined to return to Montsoreau, was upon the very point of setting out. He, the Abbé, was to accompany him for two days' march upon the road, but would return to Paris in four or five days without fail.

Charles of Montsoreau read the note with a faint and melancholy smile, and again said, "This man is not true!"

He rode at once, however, to the hotel of Villequier, but found that the minister had once more gone to Vincennes. He inquired for the Marquis of Montsoreau of the same porter who had denied the fact of his being there. The porter, not at all discomposed, replied that the Marquis and the Abbé de Boisguerin, with their train, had set out fully two hours before for Montl'hery; which, being confirmed upon farther inquiry by an Italian confectioner on the opposite side of the street,



patient expectation; but at night (
appeared from Soissons, bringing
brief note from the Duke of Guise:

"Your interview," it said, "w
might be expected; your conduc
should have been; your view of
right. They are endeavouring tc
with you and me; but we must sho
this cannot be done. I send off
once to Villequier, requiring that
authorisation shall be immediately
If it reach you not before to-mor
pray you set off at once with the
possess for Chateauneuf; for I have
scarcely to be doubted, that our po
been conveyed thither. Show h
which I gave you, requiring her t

or attempts either to delay your progress or dispute your passage, show them my letter of authority, as well as the passports that you already possess; and if they farther molest or delay you, they shall not be forgotten, be they great or small, when they come to reckon with your friend, Henry of Guise."

In a postscript was written at the bottom — "In going, avoid Dreux and Montfort, for the plague is raging there. If there be any force stationed at Chateauneuf to prevent the removal of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, only ascertain distinctly the fact of her presence in the château, and come back to rejoin me with all speed."

The tidings brought by Gondrin showed Charles of Montsoreau that great events of some kind were in preparation. Various bodies of troops attached to the House of Lorraine were moving here and there in Champaign and the Ardennes; daily conferences were held between the Duke of Guise, the Cardinal of Bourbon, the Cardinal of Guise, and a number of other influential noblemen; the propriety of deposing the King



and others. Couriers, totall
those which were sent upo
brought the young Count to
hourly passing between the ca
and it was daily whispered i
that experienced officers an
troops were daily gliding into
the army which the Duke had
so many previous occasions.

Early on the following mo
Montsoreau again proceeded
Villequier, in order that no
wanting on his part. But the
was, that the minister was abs
passed over without any tidings
King or his favourite. As h
various parts of the city, how

seemingly of the most respectable classes of citizens. On two or three occasions the burgher guard saluted him as he passed; and in one place, where several people were collected together, there was a cry of "Long live the Duke of Guise!"

All these indications of some approaching event of importance at any other moment might have given him an inclination to remain in Paris: but he had other interests more deeply at heart; and having waited till the last moment to make sure that the King's authorisation was still delayed, he prepared to set out that very night, taking with him only the number of persons specified in the passports which he had brought from Soissons.

In a brief and hurried note which he wrote to Chapelle Marteau, he informed him that he was about to absent himself from Paris for a short time on business of importance; and begged him, as it was his intention to pass out of the city by the Faubourg St. Germain that very night, to facilitate his so doing as quietly as possible. That his absence might



servants he had hired, payi
some time in advance, and dir
inquiries were made, the repl
he was only absent for a few d

When all was prepared he
the gates found his friend of
another personage, who seemed
self of great importance. No
were spoken, no passports wer
two Leaguers bowed lowly to th
opened as if of themselves, ar
the young Count rode on upc
ous to place as great a distan
and himself ere the next morn

It was a soft calm night in A
unclouded and filled with sta
upon the grass, and the air balm

fresh, and just in the grey of the morning, on the following day, he reached the small town of Rambouillet.

The signs and indications of the disturbed and anxious state of society in France were visible in the little town as the young Count gazed from the door of the inn, after seeing that his horses were well taken care of. There were anxious faces and eyes regarding the stranger with the expression of doubt, and perhaps suspicion; there were little knots gathered together and talking gloomily at the corners of different streets; the whistle of the light-hearted peasant was unheard; and the cart or the flock was driven forth in silence.

The Count's horses required rest; none were to be procured with which he could pursue his journey, and he determined to take what repose he could get ere he proceeded on his way. Casting himself down then upon a bed, he closed his eyes and sought to sleep: but suddenly something like a wild cry sounded from the other side of the street, and springing up he looked out of the window. He could almost have



There was a woman in it of age, kneeling by the bedside seemed just dead; and on look below he saw a man, dressed robe, standing on a ladder, front of the building with a l On the impulse of the mo Montsoreau ran down stairs, the door of the house, intendin he was stopped at the doo guards of the city. "Do y mark of the plague?" they s not go in; or, if you go in, yo out again."

With a sorrowful heart, Charl turned back into the inn, but h and the image of the woman c

CHAP. VII.

It was about nine o'clock at night, and the moon, rising later than the night before, had not yet gone down, as Charles of Montsoreau passed through the wide forest that then surrounded Chateauneuf en Thimerais. It was a beautiful moonlight scene, affording to the eye many various and pleasant objects. The greater part of the forest, indeed, consisted of old trees far apart from each other, and only surrounded by brushwood in patches here and there. Occasionally, indeed, deeper and thicker parts of the forest presented themselves, where the axe had not been plied so unsparingly; but the ground was hilly and broken, and the road ascended and descended continually, showing every change of the forest ground. There were manifold streams too in that part of the country, and small gushing fountains, while a chapel or two, here and there

raised by the pious inhabitants of the neighbourhood, broke the desolate appearance of the wood by showing sweet traces of human hope or gratitude. The heart, however, of Charles of Montsoreau enjoyed not that scene as it might at any other time, for many dark and painful reports had reached him of the state of the country in that district, and he looked anxiously forward to his arrival at the little village of Morvillette seated in the midst of the forest, to hear further tidings of Chateauneuf and its neighbourhood. A party of soldiers he had already heard had passed along some days before, escorting a carriage, and it was understood their destination was Chateauneuf; but the people of Tremblay, where he received this intelligence, shook the head doubtingly, and added, that the traveller would hear more at Morvillette, and could there get a guide to the château, which was two miles from the town.

At length, lying in a hollow of the woodland, the moonlight showed him a group of dark cottages; but no friendly light appeared in the windows; and as he rode on amongst the houses,

there was a sort of awful stillness about the place, which seemed to indicate that it was not slumber that kept the tongues of the peasantry silent. There were no dogs in the streets; there was no smoke curling up from any of the chimneys; all was still, and many of the doors stood wide open in the night air, exhibiting nothing but solitude within.

"There must be somebody in the place," cried Gondrin, springing from his horse and approaching one of the cottages, the door of which was shut.

Without knocking, the man threw open the door at once, and went in as far as the bridle of his horse would let him; but he came out again immediately, and his master could see that his face was pale and its expression horrified.

"A man and a woman," he said in a low voice, "both dead! the one in the bed and the other on the floor, and both of them looking as blue as a cloud."

The boy Ignati pressed up his horse to hear; and the Count said, "In all probability there may be things still more horrible before us. I



of your way to Soissons, there what you have seen, and assur do my best to fulfil his wishes i

"My Lord," said the boy, you for a kind and noble mast was not about you, but I will o with life."

"And so say I," replied Go what reassured but still anxiou us ride on, my Lord, and get o place. We shall find no one l the way."

"I believe I can find it my Count. "We turn to the left a passed the village. Come on !'

Thus saying, he somewhat q and rode away, the moon now

eminence before him. Several times he disappointed himself by fancying that he saw it when it was not there, so that, when at length he beheld a single faint point of light, like the spark of a firefly amongst the distant branches, he could scarcely believe that it afforded any true indication of that which he sought.

Riding on, however, he again and again caught sight of it, till at length the forms of the building grew more clear and defined, and after about half a mile more he rode up the gentle slope that conducted towards the château.

It was situated in the midst of a wild game park, not unlike that of Vincennes, only that the ground was more irregular. The building, however, was very different: it had been erected by that Count de Clairvaut who had been sent ambassador in the reign of Henry II. to the Republic of Venice. He had formed his ideas of beauty in architecture under another sky, and, but that it was somewhat larger and heavier, it might have been supposed that the building had been transported by some Geni from the banks of the Brenta.



gates were wide open, and
responded to the call of
his companions.

Still, however, he saw
dows of the château, and
along the path which cor
cipal gates of the building
wide flight of marble stai
brought ready polished a
pense from Italy, yellow
damp, but still altogether
and consistence from the
the place. From those st
scene beyond was fully di
the château being built ve
point of the acclivity, and
towards Dreux, Maintenon.

The moon at that moment was just sinking beyond the trees on the left, and poured over the woods and plains below a flood of silver light, caught and reflected here and there by some open stream or wide piece of water, and, shining full upon the front of the marble building, which, with its pillars, its capitals, and its cornices, its wide doors and spreading porticoes, looked like the spectre of some bright enchanted palace from another land.

The large doors that opened upon the terrace were ajar; and Charles of Montsoreau, leaving his horse with the page, mounted the steps and knocked hard with the haft of his dagger. A long melancholy echo was all the sound that was returned. He knocked again, there was no answer; and then pushing open the door, he entered the wide marble hall. The moonlight was pouring through the tall windows, but all was solitary; and putting his foot upon the first step of the staircase, he was beginning to ascend. At that moment, he thought he heard a distant sound as of an opening door; and a ray of light, streaming



from the moonlight. He asking if there was any one

In a moment after, the coming along towards the replied, "There is death the house. If you come quickly; if you come by as you may, for every brea

The tones of that voice taken, even before Char beheld the speaker; but, were spoken, Marie de Cla the top of the staircase, bea her hand, and Charles of sprang up the steps.

The lamp flashed upon tures which she had not at a loud cry she darted f

not near! These hands, not twelve hours ago, have closed the eyes of the dead. The plague most likely is upon me now!"

But before she could add more, the arms of Charles of Montsoreau were round her.

"You have called me dear," he said, "and what privilege can be dearer than sharing your fate, whatever it may be? Dear, dear, dear Marie! oh, say those words again, and make me happy!"

"But I fear for you, Charles," she said; "I fear for you. All are either dead or have fled and left me, and I shall see you die too, — you, you die also by the very touch, by the very breath, of one to whom you have restored life."

"I fear not, Marie," answered Charles; "I fear not; and that is the safest guard. Certainly you shall not see me fly and leave you; and I fear not, either, that you will see death overtake me. But oh, if even it did, how sweet would death itself be, watched by that dear face, wept by those beloved eyes!"

Marie bent down her head, and said nothing; but she strove no more against the arm that was

cast round her; her hand remained in his, and the colour rose warmly into her cheek, which had before been deadly pale.

"If," she said at length, after a long pause, during which he had continued to gaze earnestly, fondly, sadly upon her,—"If it were not that I feared for you, your presence would indeed be a comfort and a consolation to me: not that I fear for myself," she added; "I know not why, but I have never feared. It has seemed to me as if there were no danger to myself—as if I should certainly escape. But oh, how terrible it would be to see you struck by the pestilence also!"

"Say no more, dear Marie; say no more," replied Charles of Montsoreau, feeling and knowing by every word that she was his own. "I fear not; I have no fear; and even if I had, love would trample it under foot in a moment. I would not leave you in such an hour, not if by descending that short flight of steps I could save myself from death: unless indeed you told me to go, and that you loved me not."

The tears sprang into Marie de Clairvaut's eyes. "I must not tell such a falsehood," she cried, clasping her hands together, "in an hour like this. I never told you so; indeed I never did, though Madame de Saulny, poor Madame de Saulny, with her dying lips assured me that you thought so."

"There have been many errors, dear Marie," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "which have pained both your heart and mine, I fear. But now, my beloved, I must call in those that are with me, for we have travelled far and ridden hard."

"Oh, call them not in!" said Marie de Clairvaut, "for they will be frightened when they see the state of the house, and catch the pestilence and die! Bid them lead their horses to the stables, and sleep there. Perhaps they may find some one still living there, for this evening at sunset I saw my father's old groom still wandering about as usual; but you must go yourself to tell them, Charles, for I do not believe that there is any one in the house but you and I. The stables lie away to the left. I

to the right or left, for there is dea
them."

Charles of Montsoreau descenc
rapid step, and in a few words gav
tions to the servants. He then re
taking Marie de Clairvaut's hand
pressed his lips warmly upon it,
tenderly upon her as she led him al
a wide corridor to the room in wh
been sitting.

It formed a strange contrast, –
of that room, with the desolate
that all was death and solitude
rest of the house. Beautiful pi
ornaments, fine tapestry, gave it
and cheerfulness, which seemed st
feelings of Charles of Montsoreau

Heaven, prayed earnestly, fervently, that that bright and beautiful and beloved being might still be protected by the hand of the Almighty in every scene of peril and danger which might yet await her.

She sat down on the chair in which she had been reading with a look of melancholy thoughtfulness, and Charles of Montsoreau sat down beside her, and there was a long silent pause, for the hearts of both were too full of agitating feelings for words to be plentiful at first. The moment and the circumstances, indeed, took from love all shame and hesitation. Death and deprivation and desolation gave affection a brighter, a holier light, — it was like some eternal flame burning upon the altar of a ruined temple.

Marie de Clairvaut felt that at that moment she could speak things that at any other time she would have sunk into the earth to say; she felt that — with the exception of their trust in God — his love for her and hers for him formed the grand consolation of the moment, the healing balm, the great support of that



dying or dead by each other's side,
the only comfort of their passing hou
voice of death pronouncing their et
and the grave their bridal bed.

They thus thought, and it may s
to say, but — prepared as their mi
leaving the life of this earth behind
a death to them appeared sweet;
feared it, but looked forward up
enemy of human life, not with t
fying frown of the martyr, not w
and angry daring of the warrior,
calm sweet smile of resignation t
Heaven, and hopes beyond the to

Thus they remained silent, or
words, for some time; and Char
soreau felt that he was beloved.

voice of her he loved, the assurance of his happiness. Gradually he won her from conversing of the present to speak of the past; and she gently reproached him for leaving her at Montsoreau so suddenly as he had done.

"Marie," he said, with that frankness which had always characterised him, "let me tell you all; and then see if I did right or wrong. If I did wrong, you shall blame me still, and I will grieve and make any atonement in my power; but if I only mistook, and did not act wrong intentionally, you shall forgive me, and tell me that you love me."

Marie de Clairvaut gazed in his face, and asked, "And do you doubt it now, Charles?"

"Oh, no!" he cried, "oh, no! I ought not to doubt it, for Marie de Clairvaut could not speak such words as she has spoken without loving." And gently bending down his head over her, he pressed a kiss upon that dear fair brow. "Marie," he said, "it is our fate to meet in strange scenes. The last time that I kissed that brow, the last time that I held you



Clairvaut, and was not only gra
and to you for having saved me, b
its being you that did save me,
she added, slightly dropping her e
signs of deep affection which I saw.

"And yet," he exclaimed, "ar
my stay or my departure hung u
word from your lips, you gave n
stand that you had not received
of affection as signs of affection
looked upon them but as the nat
my witnessing your restoration to
thought you dead."

"Oh, Charles!" exclaimed Ma
vaut, with a slight slight smile, "c
pardon and understand such sm
as that? Did you not know that w
is shy, and seeks many a hiding

of woman's heart. Nevertheless, upon those few words and that moment depended my fate."

"I knew not that," cried Marie de Clairvaut, eagerly; "I knew not that, or, upon my honour, I would have been more sincere: but what was it, Charles, made you take so sudden a resolution? what was it made you leave me, without a reply, in the hands of those who have striven constantly ever since to make me believe that you cared not for me?"

"I will tell you all," replied her lover; and, pouring forth in eloquent words all the passion of his heart towards her, he told her how his love had grown upon him, how it had increased each hour; and making that the main subject of his tale, he told but as adjuncts to it the pain which his brother's conduct had inflicted upon him, and all the signs of rivalry which he had remarked. He then spoke of his conversation with the Abbé de Boisguerin on their way to visit the Count de Morly; and he told how agonised were all his feelings — how terrible was the struggle in

his heart. — and what was the resolution that he took, to ascertain whether her affections were really gained, and by the result to shape his conduct. He next spoke of his conversation with her immediately preceding his departure, and of the words which had led him to believe that she was unconscious of his love, and did not return it.

As she listened, the tears rose in her eyes, and, laying her soft fair hand on his, she said, "Forgive me, Charles! oh, forgive me! but do believe that there is not another woman on all the earth who would not have done the same."

"Alas! dear Marie," he replied, "in such knowledge you have but a child to deal with."

"Oh, be so ever, Charles!" she cried, clasping her hands and looking up in his face. "There may be women who would love you less for being so; but I trust and hope that you will never love any one but Marie de Clairvaut, and she will value your love all the more for its being, and having ever been, entirely her own. But you were speaking of

the Abbé de Boisguerin, Charles — you have told me of his conversation with you — I saw, when I was at Montsoreau, that you loved and esteemed him." — She paused, and hesitated. "I fear," she added, "that what I must speak, that what I ought to tell you, may pain and grieve you: — I doubt that man, Charles — I more than doubt him."

"And so do I, Marie," replied her lover with a melancholy shake of the head; "and so do I doubt him much. Indeed, as you say, I more than doubt him, for I know and feel that he is not true."

"Alas! Charles," she replied, "I fear that in that very first conversation with you he meditated treachery towards you. I fear much, very much, that his design and purpose even then was to separate us."

"Perhaps it might be so, Marie," replied her lover: "though he has never shown any strong preference, I have often thought he loves Gaspar better than he does me."

"But it was no love of your brother, Charles," she said; "it was no love of your brother moved



makes my cheek burn, for it misses
you were gone, I avoided your k
sence as far as might be. I was
him for a moment alone if I could
could not but see feelings that wer
returned. Although there was so
the first in the Abbé de Boisgueri
not, though I could not tell why—
his eye that made me shrink into
kind of fear, — I now courted hi
me, in order to avoid the persecut
which I could not feel even gratefu
seemed inclined to give your b
tunities; and I believe, I firmly b
did so because he knew that those
would but serve to confirm the c
feelings towards him. When h

visits well; and, for a space, well did he choose his conversation too. It was such as he knew must please my ear. He told me of other lands, and of princely scenes beyond the Alps, the beauties of nature, the miracles of art, the graceful but dangerous race of the Medici, the treasures, the unrivalled treasures of Florence and of Rome. I learned to forget the prejudices I had first taken towards him, and he saw that I listened well pleased, and then he ventured to speak of you and of your brother. But oh, Charles, he spoke not as a friend to either. He blamed not, indeed; he even somewhat praised; but he undervalued all and every thing. There was not a word of censure, but there was every now and then a light sneer in the tone, a scornful turn of the lip, and curl of the nostril. It pleased me not, and seeing it, he wisely dropped such themes. He spoke of you no more; but he spoke of himself and of his own history. He told me that his was the more ancient branch of your own family, but that reverses and misfortunes had overtaken it; and that, careless of wealth or station, and any of the bubbles which



however, that if he had had an ob
and powerful object, he felt within h
capabilities of mind which might ra
some of the highest heads in the lan
could hear his voice, and see the kee
of his eye, without believing that w
was true. And then again he sp
objects, the few, the only objects,
induce a man of great and expan
to mingle in the strife and turmoil
and the chief of those objects,
woman's love. He was a churchm
and had taken vows which should
such words upon his lips. I was
think turned pale, and he instantly
conversation to other things, speak
and nobly upon great and fine feel

the eye. At length we set out to join my uncle; and your brother now had opportunities of paining me greatly by the open and the rash display of feelings that grieved and hurt me. He took means too to find moments to speak with me alone, which I must not dwell upon — means which were unworthy of one of your race, Charles. He tried to deceive me into such interviews by every sort of petty art; and if the Abbé de Boisguerin came to my relief, alas! it was but now to inflict upon me worse persecution. He dared to speak to me, Charles, words that none had ever dared to speak before — words that I must not repeat, that I must not even think of here, so near the holy calmness of the dead. These words were not, indeed, addressed to me directly; but they were used to figure forth what were the passions which an ardent and fiery heart might feel. They were intended evidently to let me know of what he himself was capable: though they breathed of love, there was somewhat of menace in them likewise. The very sound of his voice, the very glare of his eyes, now became terrible to me: but he



was a terrible one. To end it a
as I take it for granted that you
part of what has taken place, eve
you here this night — I feel sure
by his machinations that I was b
the hands of the King, whom I
life been taught to abhor, and by l
to the power of a relation, from
been sheltered by all my better fri
the most venomous of serpents."

Charles of Montsoreau had hea
silence, without interrupting he
gazed indeed, from time to time,
face, watching with love and ad
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it: but he listened with full
deep thought; and when she had

comprehend or understand. His machinations, however, dear Marie, I now trust are at an end. What may be between Villequier and him I do not know; but I trust, dear Marie, I trust in that God who never does fail them that trust in him, that I come to bring you deliverance and to lead you to happiness. It would be long and tedious to tell you, beloved, all that has happened to me since I left you at Montsoreau. Suffice it that I have seen the Duke of Guise; that I have spent the greater part of the time with him; that I have been able, Marie, to serve him—he says, to save his life; and that to me he has entrusted the charge of seeking you and bringing you to join him at Soissons, in despite of any one that may oppose us."

"Oh, joy, joy!" cried Marie de Clairvaut. "When can we set out?" And she rose from her seat as if she hoped their departure might take place that minute. Charles of Montsoreau drew her gently to his heart, and, gazing into her deep tender eyes, he asked, "Will your joy be less, dear Marie, if you know that you go to



who is scarcely worthy to receive, s
as yourself?"

Marie de Clairvaut hid her fac
bosom, murmuring, in a scarcely a
"Can you ask me, Charles? — Bu
speed away quickly; for though I
been here now several days, and
nothing but death and desolation
ever since I came, have become ac
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"I still fear not, dear Marie," re
of Montsoreau. "Nevertheless, m
to bear you away to happier scenes
as the horses have taken some res
out. And now, dear girl," he ad
send you from me. You need

"If you watch, Charles," replied Marie, "I will watch with you, for I need not repose. This morning, after closing the eyes of poor Madame de Saulny, and weeping long and bitterly over her and the poor girl who was the only one that chose to remain with me, exhausted with watching, anxiety, and grief, I fell asleep, and slept long. Before that, I had felt so weary and so heated, that I almost fancied — though without fearing it — that the plague might be coming upon me; but I woke refreshed and comforted just as the sun was going down, and I felt, as it were, a hope and expectation that some change would soon come over my fate. But you need at least refreshment, Charles. In the next room remains my last untasted meal — the last that the poor frightened beings who abandoned me, set before their mistress yesterday. I fear not to take you there, Charles, for no one has died in this part of the house."

Charles of Montsoreau followed her, and persuaded her also to take some light refreshment; and there they sat through the live-long night,

chequered by fears, each for the o



CHAP. VIII.

By the time that the first grey streak chequered the dark expanse of the eastern sky, the horses of Charles of Montsoreau, with three others, were standing on the terrace at the foot of the marble steps. The page and Gondrin were there, and also the old groom, a white-headed man of some sixty years of age, who had booted and spurred himself, and buckled on a sword, declaring that he would accompany his young mistress, if it were but to lead the sumpter horse which carried her baggage. A moment after, Marie herself appeared, and Charles of Montsoreau placed her on the beast that had been prepared for her, while the old groom kissed her hand, saying, "I am glad to see you well, dear lady. But fear not; none of your race and none of mine ever died of the plague either, though I have seen it pass



fully. " But I fear not, good
myself at least. But you had b
way towards Chalet, for the C
that Morvillette is deserted."

" Oh, I will lead you safely, l
the old man; " and though ve
may keep us out of many a hou
of where we come from, there is
cottage where they will take us
not fear the plague there."

Thus saying, he mounted his h
on before, through the forest r
lady and her lover followed sid
they went on circling round the l
the hills, the grey streaks gradus
crimson; the dim objects becam
in the twilight of morning: a f

waves of a sea up towards the zenith; the fiery red next became mingled with bright streaks of gold; the forest world, just budding into light green, was seen below with its multitude of hills and dales, and rocks and streams; the air blew warm and sweet, and full of all the balm of spring; and a thousand birds burst forth on every tree, and carolled joyous hymns to the dawning day.

Never broke there a brighter morning upon earth; never rose the sun in greater splendour; never was the air more balmy, or the voices of the birds more sweet. It seemed as if all were destined to afford to those two lovers the strongest, the strangest, the brightest contrast to the dark dull night of anxiety and emotion which they had passed within the palace they had just left behind them. It seemed to both as an image of the dawn of immortality after the tomb — anxiety, sorrow, danger, death, left behind, and brightness and splendour spread out before.

Each instinctively drew in the rein as the sun's golden edge was raised above the horizon;

each gazed in the countenance of the other, as if to see that no trace of the pestilence was there; and each held out the hand to grasp that of the being most loved on earth, and then they raised their eyes to Heaven in thankfulness and joy.

The old man led them on with scarcely a pause towards Chalet; but about a mile from that place he turned to a little hamlet near, where, in a good farm-house inhabited by his daughter and her husband, they found their first resting-place. They were gladly received and heartily welcomed, without the slightest appearance of fear, though the circumstances of their flight were known. The farmer and the farmer's wife set before them the best of all they had, the children served them at the table, and the good woman of the house brought forth a large flask of plague water, and made them drink abundantly, assuring them that it was a sovereign antidote that was never known to fail. They then assigned a room to each, and though it was still daylight they gladly retired to rest. Charles of Montsoreau, though much fatigued, slept not

for near an hour, but the house was all kept quiet and still, and, with his thoughts full of her he loved, he fancied and trusted that she was sleeping calmly near him, and in an earnest prayer to Heaven he called down blessings on her slumber. At length sleep visited his own eyes, and he rose refreshed and well. Some fears, some anxieties still remained in his bosom till he again saw the countenance of Marie de Clairvaut. When he did see it, however, fears on her account vanished altogether, for the paleness which had overspread her face the night before had been banished by repose, and the soft warm glow of health was once more upon her cheek. He saw the same anxious look of inquiry upon her countenance; and oh! surely there is something not only sweet and endearing, but elevating also, in the knowledge of such mutual thoughts and cares for each other; something that draws forth even from scenes of pain and peril a joy tender and pure and high for those who love well and truly!

"Fear not, dear Marie," he said; "fear

not; for I feel well, and you too look well, so that I trust the danger is over."

"Pray God it be!" said Marie de Clairvaut. "But now, when you will, Charles, I am ready to go on; we may soon reach Maintenon."

"We must avoid the road by Maintenon," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "for that would bring us on the lands of the grasping Duke of Epernon, and we could not run a greater risk. Chartres itself is doubtful; but we must take our way thither, and act according to circumstances. However, dear Marie, our next journey must be long and fatiguing: would it not be better for you to stay here to-night, and take as much repose as you can obtain before you go on?"

"Oh no," replied Marie de Clairvaut; "I am well and strong now, and eager to get forward out of all danger. The bright moon will soon be rising, the sun has not yet set, and we may have five or six hours of calm light to pursue our way."

Her wishes were followed; and they were soon once more upon their way towards the

fair old town of Chartres. Their former journey had passed greatly in thought, for deep emotions lay fresh upon their hearts, and burthened them: but now they spoke long and frequently upon every part of their mutual situation. The history of every event that had happened to either, since they had parted at Montsoreau, was told and dwelt upon with all its details: and while the love of Charles of Montsoreau for his fair companion certainly did not diminish, every word that fell from his lips, every act that she heard him relate, and the manner of relating it also, increased in her bosom that love which she had at first perceived with shame, but in which she now began to take a pride as well as a joy.

Nor, indeed, did his conduct and demeanour to herself in the circumstances which surrounded them — circumstances of some difficulty and delicacy — change one bright feeling of her heart towards him. There was very much of that tenderness in his nature, that soft, that gentle kindness, which, when joined with courage and strength, is more powerful on the

affections of woman than, perhaps, any other quality; and her feelings were changed and rendered more devoted by being dependent upon him for every thing — protection, and consolation, and support, and affection, and all those little cares and kindnesses which their mutual situation enabled him to show.

Thus they journeyed on for several hours, and at length reached the town of Chartres, having agreed to pass for brother and sister, as the safest means of escaping observation. It was about eleven o'clock at night when they reached the inn, but they were received with all kindness and hospitality, such as inn-keepers ever show to those who seem capable of paying for good treatment. No questions were asked, supper was set before them, and the night passed over again in ease and comfort. Every hour, indeed, that went by without displaying any sign of illness was in itself a joy; and there was a stillness and a quietness about the old town of Chartres which seemed to quiet all fears of annoyance or interruption.

Charles of Montsoreau was early up, and

was waiting for the appearance of Marie de Clairvaut, when the landlord of the inn appeared to inform him that a horse-litter, which he had ordered to be ready for his inspection, had been brought into the court-yard, and was waiting for him to see. At that moment, however, there was a flourish of trumpets in the street; and, looking forth from the window, the young Count saw a considerable band of mounted soldiers, drawn up, as if about to proceed on their march.

"My sister," he said, turning to the host, "has not yet risen, and she must see the litter, too, as it is for her convenience. But who are these gallant gentlemen before the house, and whither are they going?"

"Why, you might know them, sir, by their plumes and their scarfs," replied the host. "They are a body of the light horse of the guard of the Queen-mother. They are easily distinguished, I ween."

"Ay, but I am a rustic from the provinces," replied the young nobleman: "but they seem gallant-looking soldiers."

"The Captain was making manifold inquiries about you and the young lady who arrived last night," replied the landlord, "for he has come with orders to seek and bring back to Paris some young lady and gentleman that have made their escape lately with eight or nine attendants. But when I told him that you were going to Paris, not coming from it, and that you had only three servants with you, and the young lady was your sister, he said it was not the same, and is now going on. But I must go, lest he should ask for me."

"Well, well," answered the young Count with an air of indifference. "I will be down presently to see the litter; let it wait."

He watched, however, with some anxiety the departure of the body of light horse, for though he did not feel by any means sure that it was himself whom they sought, he did not feel at all secure till the last faint note of their trumpets was heard, as they issued forth from one of the further gates of Chartres. As soon as Marie de Clairvaut appeared, he purchased the litter without much hesitation, and determined to

proceed with all speed towards Dourdan and Corbeil.

The host of the inn would have fain had them stay some time longer, for the young Count had paid so readily for the litter, that he judged some gold might be further extracted from his purse. He asked him, therefore, whether there was nothing in the good town of Chartres to excite his curiosity, and was beginning a long list of marvels; but Charles of Montsoreau cut him short, saying, as he looked up at the sign covered with fleurs-de-lis, "No, no, my good host. I have much business on my hands in which his Majesty is not a little concerned, and therefore I must lose no time."

The host nodded his head, looked wise, and suffered the Count and his party to depart without further opposition.

As it was not a part of their plan to follow the high road more than they were actually obliged to do, soon after leaving Chartres they took a path to the left, which they were informed would lead them by Gellardon to Bonnelle, through the fields and woods. Before they had

gone a league, however, the noise of dogs and horses, and the shouts, as it seemed, of huntsmen, were heard at no great distance; and turning towards Gondrin the young Count asked, "What can they be hunting at this time of year?"

"The wolf, my Lord, the wolf," replied the man. "They hunt wolves at all times."

Scarcely had he spoken, when a loud yell of the dogs was heard; and nodding his head sagaciously, as if he had seen the whole proceeding with his mind's eye, Gondrin added, "They have killed him;" which was confirmed by a number of joyous morts on the horns of the huntsmen.

"Let us proceed as fast as possible," said Charles of Montsoreau; "we know not who those huntsmen may be:" and he was urging the driver of the litter to hurry on his horses rapidly, when the whole road before them was suddenly filled with a gay party of cavaliers, splendidly dressed and accoutred, and coming direct towards them. There was nothing now to be done but to pass on quietly if possible; and, taking no apparent notice, but bending his

head and speaking into the litter, without even seeing of whom the other party was composed, Charles of Montsoreau was riding on, when a loud voice was heard exclaiming "Halt there! halt! A word with you if you please, young sir;" and, looking up, he saw the Duke of Epernon.

Without suffering the slightest surprise to appear upon his countenance, or the slightest apprehension, Charles of Montsoreau turned his head, demanding calmly, "Well, my Lord, what is your pleasure with me?"

"My pleasure is," replied the Duke, "that you instantly turn your horse's head and go back to Epernon with me."

"I am extremely sorry, my Lord," replied the Count, "that it is quite impossible for me to do what you propose, as I am upon urgent business for the Duke of Guise, and bear the King's passport and safe-conduct, which I presume your Lordship will not despise."

"You may bear the King's passport, sir," said the Duke, "but you certainly do not bear his authorisation to carry away from his power the young lady who I suppose is in that litter.

As to the Duke of Guise, your authority from him is very much doubted also."

"That doubt is easily removed, my Lord," replied the Count, seeing clearly that he would be forced to yield, but fully resolved not to do so till he had tried every means to avoid it. "That doubt is easily removed, my Lord. Allow me to show you the authority given me by the Duke under his own hand, which I think even the Duke of Epernon must respect."

The Duke took the paper which he tendered him, and then saying, "I will show you how I respect it," he tore it into a thousand pieces, and cast it beneath his horse's feet, while a laugh ran through the men that attended him. "Turn your horse's head," he continued, "without more ado, or I will have your arms tied behind your back, and the horse led."

"My Lord," replied the young Count, "I must obey, for I have no means of resisting; but let me remind you, that the Duke of Epernon was always considered, even before what he is now, a gallant gentleman and a man of good feeling, who would not insult

those who were too weak to oppose him, and who did their duty honourably as far as it was possible for them to do it."

"Your civility now, sir," replied the Duke, "like your rash folly a week or two ago, is too contemptible to make any change in the Duke of Epernon. That foolish party of light horse," he continued, speaking to one of his attendants, "must have suffered this malapert youth and his fair charge to have passed it. Turn the litter round there; take care that none of them escape."

"The boy has made off already," replied one of the men. "Shall I gallop after him, my Lord? He may tell the Duke of Guise."

"Let him!" answered Epernon. "Go not one of you; but bring the rest of them along hither."

Without giving any intimation of his intent, Charles of Montsoreau turned his horse suddenly back to the side of the litter, and drew the curtain back, saying to Marie de Clairvaut, who sat pale and anxious within it, "You hear what has happened; there is no power of re-

sistance, for they are ten to one: but the boy has escaped, and will give the Duke notice of where you are. In the mean time it is one comfort, that now you are in the hands of one who is, at all events, a man of honour and a gentleman in feeling."

What he said was intended to give comfort and consolation to Marie de Clairvaut; but it reached the ear of the Duke of Epernon likewise. "I must suffer no farther conversation," he said in a gentler tone than he had before used. "You will understand, Monsieur de Logères, that I have authority for what I do; and that I arrest you out of no personal vengeance, but because the order has been already given to that effect."

"My Lord," replied the young Count, "I care very little for my own arrest, as I know that I can but be detained a short time: but I confess I am most anxious for the young lady placed under my especial charge by the Duke of Guise, as I have shown your Lordship by the paper you have torn. If she is to remain in your Lordship's charge, I shall be more satisfied;

but if she is to be given up to Monsieur de Villequier, the consequences will indeed be painful to all. You are perhaps not aware, my Lord, that he sent her to a place where the plague was raging at the time, where six persons of her household died of it, and the rest fled, leaving her utterly alone."

The Duke seemed moved, and after remaining silent for a minute, he replied, "I did not know it; the man who would murder his wife, would make no great scruple of killing his cousin, I suppose. However, sir, set your mind at ease: though I cannot promise that she shall remain with the Duchess of Epernon, she shall not be given up to Villequier either by myself or by any body in whose hands I may place her. Is that assurance sufficient for you?"

"Perfectly, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "The Duke of Epernon's promise is as good as the bond of other men."

"Well, follow me, then," replied the Duke, and, riding on alone, he left the young Count in the hands of his attendants.

CHAP. IX.

It was in one of the saloons of the old Cardinal de Bourbon, in the town of Soissons, that Henry Duke of Guise, princely in his habit, princely in his aspect, with his foot raised upon a footstool of crimson and gold, a high plumed Spanish hat upon his head, manifold parchments before him, and a pen in his hand, sat alone on a day in the month of April with his eyes fixed upon a door at the other end of the room, as if waiting for the entrance of some one.

The next moment the door was thrown wide open, and, preceded by two servants announcing him to the Duke, appeared a small and not very striking personage plainly habited in black velvet. The moment the Duke saw him, he rose, and for an instant uncovered his head, then covering himself again he advanced to

meet him, and took him by the hand, saying "Monsieur de Bellievre, I am delighted to see you. The King could not have chosen any one more gratifying to myself to receive: in the first place, because I know that I shall hear nothing but truth from the lips of Monsieur de Bellievre; and, in the next place, because I am sure no one will bear more exactly to his Majesty any reply I may have to make to the message with which I understand you are charged."

"The confidence which your Highness expresses in me," replied Bellievre, as the Duke led him towards the table, and made him seat himself beside him, "does great honour to so humble an individual as myself. Nevertheless, I must deliver the King's message, my Lord, precisely as it was given to me; and should there be any thing in it disagreeable to your Highness, I trust that you will excuse the bearer, and consider the matter dispassionately."

"Proceed, proceed," replied the Duke; "as in duty bound I shall receive his Majesty's

communication with all deference and humility."

"Well, then," replied Bellievre, "I am charged by his Majesty to assure your Highness that his personal esteem and respect for you is very great; and that he has never, in any degree, given ear to the injurious reports which persons inimical to your Highness have been industrious in circulating to your disadvantage."

"Your pardon, Monsieur de Bellievre, for one moment," said the Duke, interrupting him. "To what injurious reports does his Majesty allude? I am ignorant that any one has dared to circulate injurious reports of me; and if such be the case, it is high time that I should proceed to the capital to confront and shame my accusers."

As this was not at all the point to which the King's envoy wished to bring the Duke, he looked not a little embarrassed what to reply. He answered, however, after a moment's pause, "It would, indeed, be requisite for you to do so, my Lord, if I did not bear you the

King's most positive assurance that he gives no ear to such reports. But to proceed: his Majesty has bid me strongly express his full conviction of your attachment, fidelity, and affection, but has commanded me to add that, having heard it reported your intention is immediately to present yourself in Paris, he is unwillingly obliged, by state reasons of the utmost importance, to request that you would forbear the execution of that purpose."

It was not without some hesitation and apparent emotion that Bellievre spoke; but the Duke heard him with perfect calmness, though with a slight contraction of the brow.

"The report," he answered, "of my intention of visiting Paris is perfectly correct, Monsieur de Bellievre; nor can I, indeed, refrain from executing that purpose, with all due deference to his Majesty, for many reasons, amongst which those that you yourself give me of injurious rumours being rife in the capital regarding me, are not the least cogent. Thus, unless the King intends to signify by you, Monsieur de Bellievre, that he positively prohibits my

coming into Paris — which, of course, he would not do — I see not how I can avoid doing simple justice to myself by returning to my own dwelling in the capital of this country."

"I grieve to say, your Highness," replied Bellievre, seeing that the worst must be told, "I grieve to say, that while the King has charged me to assure you of his regard and his confidence in you, he none the less instructed me to make the prohibition on his part absolute and distinct."

The Duke of Guise started up with his brow knit and his eyes flashing. "Is this the reward," he exclaimed, "of all the services I have rendered the state? Is this the recompence for having shed my blood so often in defence of France? to be dishonoured in the eyes of all the people, by being banished from the metropolis, to be excluded from the companionship of all my friends, to be cut off from transacting my own private affairs, to be talked of and pointed at as the exiled Duke of Guise, and to have the boys singing in the streets the woeful ditty of my sufferings and a King's ingrati-

tude?" And as he spoke, the Duke took two or three rapid strides up and down the room.

"Indeed, indeed, your Highness," cried Bellievre, "you take it up too warmly. The King is far from ungrateful, but most thankful for your high services; but it is for the good of the state that you love, for the safety and security of the people of the capital who are in a tumultuous and highly excitable state, that he wishes you to refrain from coming ——"

"That he sends me a message dishonouring to myself and to my House," replied the Duke. "That he marks me out from the rest of the nobles of the land, by a prohibition which I may venture to say is unjust and unmerited. I must take some days to think of this, Monsieur de Bellievre; nor can I in any way promise not to visit Paris. Were it but to protect, support, and guide my friends and relations, I ought to go; were it but on account of the church for which I am ready to shed my blood if it be necessary, persecuted, reviled, assailed as that holy church is; were it but for my atten-



" As for the church, your r
Bellievre, " none is more sinc
it than the King and the Kir
will stand long, my Lord,
without any further assistance
you have already so ably give
tions, my Lord, and household
not and cannot be ill-treated."

" How ?" exclaimed the D
dear sister Margaret even now
scribed by the King and his co
thing done to drive her from I
her servants been struck by th
in the open streets ?"

" I know," replied Bellievr
or two ago Madame de Montp
to some little annoyance, but a

secure in the capital of France," replied the Duke; "and I trust always will be."

"Nothing has occurred since I trust, my Lord," continued Bellievre. "The King is most anxious that you should have satisfaction in every thing, and will give you the strongest assurances that your family, your household, and your friends, shall be in every respect well treated and protected, as indeed he has always wished them to be."

The Duke threw himself down in his chair and rang the bell that stood upon the table violently. "Ho! without there!" he exclaimed. "Bring in that page that arrived hither a night or two ago, when I was absent at Jamets."

The attendant who had appeared retired, and the Duke sat silent, gazing with a frown at the papers on the table. "May I ask your Highness," said Bellievre, not knowing what interpretation to put upon this conduct, "May I ask your Highness whether I am to conceive my audience at an end?"

"No, Monsieur de Bellievre, no," replied the Duke in a milder tone; "for *you* I have a

high respect and esteem, and will listen to you upon this subject longer than I would to most men. I wish you to hear and to know how the friends of the Duke of Guise are treated, what protection and favour is shown to them at the court of France. Perhaps you will hear some things that are new to you — perhaps they may be new to the King too," he added, a slight sneer curling his haughty lip. "But be that as it may, Monsieur de Bellievre, I think I can show you good cause why the Duke of Guise should be no longer absent from Paris. Come hither, boy," he added, as the page Ignati entered the room, "Come hither, boy, and answer my questions. Thou art both witty and honest, but give me plain straightforward replies. Stand at my knee and answer, so that this gentleman may hear."

The boy advanced, and did as the Duke bade him, turning his face towards Bellievre, with his left hand to the Duke.

"You went to Paris," said Guise, "with my friend the young Count of Logères; did you not? Were you aware of the cause of his going?"

"He went, I understood your Highness," replied the boy, "to seek a young lady, a relation of your own, who had been carried to Paris by a body of the King's troops while on her way to join your Highness."

"Can you tell what was Monsieur de Logères' success?" said the Duke.

"I know he saw the King," replied the boy, "and heard that he had been promised a letter to all the governors and commanders in different places to aid him in seeking for the young Lady, and bringing her back to your Highness. I heard also that it was for this paper he waited from day to day in Paris, but that it never came."

"I beg your Highness's pardon," said Bellievre interrupting the boy, "but you will remark that this is all hearsay. He does not seem to speak at all from his own knowledge."

"That will come after," answered the Duke somewhat sharply. "Go on, Ignati. What do you know more?"

"What I have said," replied the boy, "is more than hearsay, my Lord, for while we staid

in Paris the good Count bade us always be ready at a moment's notice to set out, for he could not tell when the letter from Monsieur de Villequier would arrive. It never came, however, and one night the Count having, as I understood, gained information of where Mademoiselle de Clairvaut was, set out with his man Gondrin and myself to seek her. We found that she had been brought by a body of the King's troops to a château or a palace, for it looked more like a palace than a château, called Morvillette, I believe near Chateauneuf, where the plague was then raging, when the King's soldiers left her. By the time we arrived the plague had reached the château, six or seven people were dead, and all the rest had fled, leaving the young lady with nobody in the palace, and none but one old groom in the stables."

The Duke's eye fixed sternly upon the countenance of Bellievre, and he muttered between his teeth, "This is the doing, Monsieur de Bellievre, of my excellent good friend, the King of France. Go on, boy; go on! Proceed. What happened next?"

"The lady was most joyous of her deliverance," continued the boy, "and eager to come to your Highness; and we set out the next morning before day-break, and reached Chartres, where the Count bought a litter for her greater convenience. At a short distance from Chartres, however, we were met by the Duke of Epernon and his train wolf-hunting, and the Duke immediately stopped us, and insisted upon the Count going back with him to Epernon. The Count produced the King's passports, but the Duke said that there were doubts of his being authorised by you."

"Did he not show him my own letter?" exclaimed the Duke. "Did he not show him the authority I gave him under my own hand?"

"He did, my Lord; he did," replied the boy; "but the Duke of Epernon said he would show in what respect he held your Highness's letter, and tearing it in several pieces he threw it down under his horse's feet."

Bellievre continued to look down upon the ground with a brow which certainly displayed but little satisfaction. The Duke of Guise,

however, though he had been frowning the moment before, now only smiled as the boy related the incident of the letter; the smile was somewhat contemptuous, indeed; but he said merely, "Go on, boy. What happened next?"

"Nay, my Lord," replied the boy, "what happened to them I know not, for seeing that the Duke held them prisoners, and was taking them back to Epernon, I made my escape as fast as I well could, and came hither to tell you into whose hands the young lady and Monsieur de Logères had fallen."

"You did quite right, boy," said the Duke; "and now you may retire. You hear, Monsieur de Bellievre," he continued, "with what kindness, protection, support, and generosity the King treats the friends of the Duke of Guise! First he casts my poor niece's child into the hands of Villequier, something worse than those of the hangman of Paris, and then between them they send her into the midst of the pestilence; then comes Monsieur d'Epernon to confirm all, arrests my friend bearing the King's own passports and safeguard, seizes upon my own rela-

tion and ward, and carries them both I know not whither."

"Perhaps your Highness," said Bellievre, "the Duke of Epernon might have motives that we do not know. At all events the King——"

"Fie, Monsieur de Bellievre, fie!" exclaimed the Duke vehemently. "I will tell you what! It is time the Duke of Guise were in Paris, if but to deliver the King from such Dukes of Epernon who abuse his authority, disgrace his name, absorb his favours, ruin the state, overthrow the church, and dare do acts that make men blush for shame. France will no longer suffer him, sir; France will no longer suffer him! If I free not the King from him and such as he is, the people will rise up and commit some foul attempt upon the royal authority. What," he continued, with fierce scorn, "What, though he be Baron of Caumont, Duke of Epernon, raised out of his place to sit near the princes of the blood, Governor of Metz and Normandy, of the Boulonnais, and Aunis, of Touraine, Saintonge, and Angoumois, Colonel-general of Infantry, and Governor of Anjou, a Knight of

the order of the Holy Ghost! he shall find this simple steel sword of Henry of Guise sufficiently sharp to cut his parchments into pieces, and send him back a beggar to the class he sprung from."

The Duke spoke so rapidly, that to interrupt him was impossible; and so angrily, that Bellievre, overawed, remained silent for a moment or two after he had done, while the Prince bent his eyes down upon the table, and played with the golden tassels of his sword-knot, as if half ashamed of the vehemence he had displayed.

"I did not come here, your Highness," he said, "either as the envoy or the advocate of the Duke of Epernon. You must well know that there is no great love between us; and I doubt not, when your Highness comes to call him to account for his deeds, that justice will be found entirely on your side. But I came on the part of the King; and I beseech you to consider, my good Lord, what may be the consequences of pressing even any severe charges against the Duke of Epernon at this

moment, when his Majesty is contending with the heretics on the one side, and is somewhat troubled by an unruly people on the other."

"Is he indeed contending with any body or any thing, Bellievre?" demanded the Duke. "Is he indeed contending against the Bearnois? Is he contending against the indolence of his own nature, or rather against the indolence into which corrupt favourites have cast him? Is he contending against the iniquities of Villequier, or the exactions of Epernon? Is he contending against any thing less contemptible than a spaniel puppy or an unteachable parrot? My love and attachment to the King and his crown, Bellievre, are greater than yours; and, as my final reply, I beg you humbly to inform his Majesty on my part, that if I do not promptly and entirely obey him in this matter of not coming to Paris, it is solely because I am compelled to do as I do, for the good of the church, for the safety of the state, for the security of my own relations and friends, and even for the benefit of his Majesty himself. This is my final reply."

"Yet one word, my Lord," replied Bellievre. "At all events, if your determination to visit the capital be taken, will you not at least, at my earnest prayer, delay your journey till I myself can return to Paris, and obtaining more ample explanations of the King's purposes, come back to you and confer with you farther on the subject."

"I see not, Monsieur de Bellievre," said the Duke of Guise, "what good could be obtained by such delay. I do not at all mean to say that you would take advantage of my confidence to prepare any evil measures against me; but others might do so: and besides, my honour calls me not to leave my friends in peril for a moment, even though I called upon my head the enmity of a whole host in stepping forward to rescue them."

"I pledge you my honour, my Lord," replied Bellievre, "that if you will consent to delay, no measures shall be taken against you; and I will do the very best I can to induce the King to make any atonement in his power to your friends. As to this young Count of Logères, I never

heard of him before to-day, and know not what has been done with him at all; and in regard to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, she is doubtless in the hands of Villequier, who, I understand, claims the guardianship."

"To which he has less right," replied the Duke angrily, "than that footstool; and if he contends with me, I will spurn him as I do it;" and he suited the gesture to the word. "But still I see not," continued the Duke, "what is to be gained by this delay to either party."

"This, my good Lord," replied Bellievre. "I am well aware that his Majesty the King has sent me here without sufficient powers to make you just and definite proposals. This I believe to have been entirely from the haste in which I came away, there being no time for thought. But if you permit me to return with assurance that you will wait but a few days, I feel convinced that I shall come back to you with offers so abundant, so satisfactory, and so well secured, that your Lordship will change your resolution."

The Duke mused for a moment or two.

"Well, Monsieur de Bellievre," he said at length, "though I entertain no such hopes as you do, I must yield something to my loyalty, and to my real desire of obeying the King; although, perhaps, my duty to my country and to the church might well lead me to more prompt proceedings. I will, therefore, delay my journey for a day or two; but you must use all speed, and I must have no trifling. You know all my just grievances: those must be remedied, the church must be secured; and for the quiet and the satisfaction of the people who abhor and detest him, as well as for the relief of the nobles who have long been shut out from all favour by that unworthy minion, this John of Nogaret, this Duke of Epernon, must be banished from the court and councils of the King, and stripped of the places and dignities which he has won from the weak condescension of the Monarch. You understand me, Monsieur de Bellievre," he said in a sterner tone, seeing that Bellievre looked somewhat dismayed at the extent of his demands. "Undertake not the mission if you think that you cannot succeed in it; but let me on my way without more opposition."

"My Lord, I will do my best to succeed," replied Bellievre; "and trust that I shall do so. How many days will your Highness give me?"

"Nay, nay," replied the Duke; "that I cannot tell, Monsieur de Bellievre. Suffice it, I will delay as long as my honour permits me; and you on your part lose not an hour in making the necessary arrangements, and bringing the King's reply."

As he spoke the Duke rose to terminate the conference; and then added, "I fear, Monsieur de Bellievre, as I am expecting every moment my brother, the Cardinal de Guise, and his Eminence of Bourbon, to confer with me upon matters of importance, I cannot do the honours of the house to you as I could wish; but Pericard, my secretary and friend, will attend upon you, and insure that you have every sort of refreshment. I will send for him this moment." And so doing, he placed Bellievre in the hands of his secretary, and turned once more to other business.

The King's envoy sped back to Paris,



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the feather out of his hands; and Henry, stroking it down the head, called it "Mon Duc de Guise."

Bellievre bowed low, and moved towards the door. "Come back to-morrow, Bellievre; come back to-morrow," said the King; "Villequier will be here then. You see at present how importantly I am occupied with my fair cousin of Guise here;" and he pulled the monkey's whiskers as he spoke. "Villequier has told me all about it," he added. "He says the Duke will not come, and so says my mother; and if they both say the same thing who never agreed upon any point before, it must be true, Bellievre, you know."

"I trust it may, Sire," replied Bellievre dryly, and quitted the room with anger and indignation at his heart. Before he had crossed the anteroom, he heard a loud laugh ringing like that of a fool from the lips of the Monarch; and although it was doubtless occasioned by some new gambol of the monkey, it did not serve to diminish the bitter feelings which were in the diplomatist's bosom.

CHAP. X.

In a small, dark, oaken cabinet with one window high up and barred, a lamp hanging from the ceiling, a table with books and a musical instrument, several chairs, and a silver bell, Charles of Montsoreau was seated several days after the period at which we last left him. A bedroom well furnished in every respect was beyond; the least sound of the silver bell produced immediate attendance; nothing was refused him that he demanded; nothing was wanting to his comfort except liberty and the sound of some other human being's voice. Yet, strange to say, although he knew that he was in the city of Paris, he knew nothing more of the position of the building in which he was placed. He had been brought into the capital at night, had been conducted through a number of narrow and tortuous streets, and had at length been led

through a deep archway and several large courts, to the place in which he was now confined.

It may seem perhaps that such a state of imprisonment did not offer much to complain of; and yet it had bent his spirit and bowed down his heart. The want of all knowledge of what was passing around him, the absence of every one that he loved, the loss of liberty, the perfect silence, joined with anxiety for one who was dearer to him than himself, wore him day by day, and took from him the power of enjoying any of those things which were provided for his convenience or amusement.

The servant who attended upon him never opened his lips, he obeyed any orders that were given to him, he brought any thing that was demanded; but he replied to no questions, he made no observations, he afforded no information even by a look. Every bolt and bar that was on the outside of the door was invariably drawn behind him, and the high window in either room could only be so far reached even by standing on the table or one of the chairs, as to enable the young nobleman to open or shut

it at pleasure, so to admit the free air from without.

Such had been the condition of Charles of Montsoreau, as we have said, for many days; but he had not yet become reconciled in any degree to his fate, though he strove, as far as possible, to while away the moments in any way that was permitted, either by books or music. But it was with impatience and disgust that he did so, and the lute was taken up and laid down, the book read and cast away, without remaining in his hands for the space of five minutes.

The sun shone bright through the high window, and traced a moving spot of golden light upon the dark oak of the opposite wainscot; the air of spring came sweet and pleasantly through, and gave him back the thoughts and dreams of liberty; a wild plant rooted in the stonework of the building without, cast its light feathery shadow on the wall where the sun shone, and the hum and roar of distant multitudes, pursuing their busy course in the thronged thoroughfares of the city, brought him his only tidings from the hurried and struggling scene of human life.

He took a pleasure in watching the leaves of the little plant as, waved about by the wind, they played against the bars of the window, and he was thus occupied on the day we have mentioned, when suddenly something crossed the light for a moment, as if some small bird had flown by; but at the same instant a roll of paper fell at his feet, and taking it up, he recognised the well-known writing of the Duke of Guise.

"You have suffered for my sake," the paper said, "and I hastened to deliver you. The day of the Epernons is over; your place of imprisonment is known. Be not dispirited, therefore, for relief is at hand."

It cannot be told how great was the relief which this note itself brought to the mind of the young Count, not alone by the promise that it held out, but by the very feeling that it gave him of not being utterly forgotten, of being not entirely alone and desolate. He read it over two or three times, and then hearing one of the bolts of the door undrawn, he concealed it hastily lest the attendant should see it.

Another bolt was immediately afterwards

pulled back, and then the door was unlocked, though far more slowly than usual. It seemed to the young Count that an unaccustomed hand was busy with the fastenings, and a faint hope of speedy deliverance shot across his mind.

The next instant, however, the door was opened, and though it certainly was not the usual attendant who appeared, no face presented itself that was known to Charles of Montsoreau. The figure was that of a woman, tall, stately, and dressed in garments of deep black, fitting tightly round the shoulders and the waist, and flowing away in ample folds below. Her hair was entirely covered by black silk and lace, but her face was seen, and that face was one which instantly drew all attention to itself.

It was not indeed the beauty which attracted, though there were great remains of beauty too, but it was the face not only of an old woman, but of one who had been somewhat a spendthrift of youth's charms. There was, however, a keen fire in the eyes, a strong determination on the brow, an expansion of the nostril, which gave the idea of quick and eager feelings, and a de-

gree of sternness about the whole line of the features, which would have made the whole countenance commanding, but harsh and severe, had it not been for a light and playful smile that gleamed across the whole, like some of the bright and sudden rays of light that from to time we see run across the bosom of deep still shady waters.

There was a degree of mockery in that smile, too; and yet it spoke affections and feelings which as strangely blended with the general character of that woman's life, as the smile itself did with the general expression of her countenance. The hands were beautiful and delicately small, and the figure good, with but few signs of age about it.

The young Count gazed upon her with some surprise as she entered, but instantly rose from the seat in which he had been sitting while reading the Duke of Guise's note; and the lady, with a graceful inclination of the head, closed the door, advanced and seated herself, examining the young Count from head to foot with a look of calm consideration, which he very well

understood implied the habitual exercise of authority and power.

After thus gazing at him for a moment or two, she said, "Monsieur le Comte de Logères, do you know me?"

"If you mean, madam," he replied, "to ask me if I recognise your person, I believe I do; but if you would ask absolutely whether I know you, I must say, no."

One of those light smiles passed quick across her countenance, and she said in a low voice, as if speaking to herself, "Who ever did know me?" She then added, "Who then do you suppose I am?"

"I conclude, madam," replied the young Count, "that I stand in the presence of her Majesty the Queen-mother."

"Such is the case," replied the Queen, "and I have come to visit you, Monsieur de Logères, with views and purposes which, were I to tell them to any person at my son's court, would hardly be believed."

The Queen paused, as if waiting for an answer; and the young Count replied, "I

trust, madam, that if I am detained here by the directions, and in the power of your Majesty, that you have come to give me liberty, which would, I suppose," he added with somewhat of a smile, "be rather marvellous to the courtiers of the King."

Catharine de Medici smiled also, but at the same time shook her head. "I fear I must not give you liberty," she said, "for I have promised not: but I have come with no bad intent towards you. I knew your mother, Monsieur de Logères, and a virtuous and beautiful woman she was. God help us! it shows that I am growing old, my praising any woman for her virtue. However, she was what I have said, and as unlike myself as possible. Perhaps that was the reason that I liked her, for we like not things that are too near ourselves. However, I have come hither to see her son, and to do him a pleasure. You play upon the lute?" she continued. "Come, 't is a long time since I have heard the lute well played. Take up the instrument, and add your voice to it."

"Alas, madam," replied the young Count,

"I am but in an ill mood for music. If I sang you a melancholy lay it would find such stirring harmonies in my own heart, that I fear I should drown the song in tears; and if I sang you a gay one, it would be all discord. I would much rather open that door which you have left unlocked behind you, and go out."

The Queen did not stir in the slightest degree, but gazed upon him attentively with a look of compassion, answering, "Alas! poor bird, you would find that your cage has a double door. But come, do as I bid you; sit down there, take up the lute and sing. Let your song be neither gay nor sad! Let it be a song of love. I doubt not that such a youth as you are, will easily find a love ditty in your heart, though the present inspiration be no better than an old woman. Come, Monsieur de Logères, come: sit down and sing. I am a judge of music, I can tell you."

With a faint smile the Count did as she bade him; and taking up the lute, he ran his fingers over the chords, thought for a moment or two, and recollecting nothing better suited

to the moment, he sang an Italian song of love, in which sometime before he had ventured to shadow forth to Marie de Clairvaut, when she was at Montsoreau, the first feelings of affection that were growing up in his heart. The Queen sat by in the mean time, listening attentively, with her head a little bent forward, and her hand marking the cadences on her knee.

"Beautifully sung, Monsieur de Logères," she said at length when he ended. "Beautifully sung, and as well accompanied. You do not know how much pleasure you have given. —Now, let us talk of other things. Are you sincere, man?"

"I trust so, madam," replied the Count. "I believe I have never borne any other character."

"Who taught you to play so well on the lute?" demanded the Queen abruptly.

"I have had no great instruction, madam," answered the Count somewhat surprised. "I taught myself a little in my boyhood. But afterwards my preceptor, the Abbé de Boisguerin, was my chief instructor. He had learned well in Italy."

"Did he teach you sincerity too?" demanded the Queen with a keen look; "and did he earn that in Italy?"

The Count was not a little surprised to find Catherine's questions touch so immediately upon the late discoveries he had made of the character of the Abbé de Boisguerin, and he replied with some bitterness, "He could but teach me, madam, that which he possessed himself. I trust that to my nature and my blood I owe whatever sincerity may be in me. I learned it from none but from God and my own heart."

"Then you know him," said the Queen, reaching the point at once; "that is sufficient at present on that subject. I know him too. He came to the court of France several years ago," with letters from my fair cousin the Cardinal; but he brought with him nothing that I wanted at that time. He had a wily head, a handsome person, manifold accomplishments, great learning, and services for the highest bidder. We had too many such things at the court already, so I thought that

the sooner he was out of it the better, and looked cold upon him till he went. He understood the matter well, and did not return till he brought something in his hand to barter for favour. However, Monsieur de Logères, to turn to other matters; I do believe you may be sincere after all. I shall discover in a minute, however. Will you answer me a question or two concerning the Duke of Guise?"

"It depends entirely upon what they are, madam," replied the Count at once.

"Then you will not answer me every question, even if it were to gain your liberty."

"Certainly not, madam," replied the Count.

"Then the Duke has been speaking ill of me," said Catherine at once, "otherwise you would not be so fearful."

"Not so, indeed," replied the Count, eagerly. "The Duke never, in my presence, uttered a word against your Majesty."

"Then will you tell me, as a man of honour," demanded the Queen, "exactly, word for word what you have ever heard the Duke say of me?"



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weeks I believe, the sound of a human voice, or seen any other face but that of one attendant, is full repayment for the little that I have to tell. However, madam, to gratify you with regard to the Duke, the first time that I ever heard him mention you was in the city of Rheims, where a number of persons were collected together, and many violent opinions were expressed, with which I will not offend your ears; your past life was spoken of by some of the gentlemen present ——"

"Pass over that, pass over that! I understand!" replied the Queen with a sarcastic smile; "I understand. But those things are not worth speaking of. What of the present, Monsieur de Logères? What of the present?"

"Why, some one expressed an opinion, madam," the Count continued, "that in order to retain a great share of power, you did every thing you could to keep his Majesty in the lethargic and indolent state in which I grieve to say he appears to the great mass of his subjects."

"What said the Duke?" demanded the

Queen. "What said the Duke? surely he knows me better."

"Why, madam," replied the Count, "his eye brightened and his colour rose, and he replied indignantly that it could not be so. 'Oh no,' he said, 'happy had it been for France if, instead of divided power, the Queen-mother had possessed the whole power. It is by petty minds mingling their leven with their great designs that ruin has come upon the land. She has had to deal with great men, great events, and great difficulties, and she was equal to deal with, if not to bow them all down before her, had she but been permitted to deal with them unshackled.'"*

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Queen; "did he say so?"

"He did, madam, upon my honour," replied the Count.

"I know not whether he was right or wrong," rejoined the Queen thoughtfully; "for though perhaps, Monsieur de Logères, I possessed in some things the powers of a man — say, if you

* Such was undoubtedly the expressed opinion of the Duke of Guise.

will, greater powers than most men — yet, alas! in others, I had all the weaknesses of a woman — perhaps I should say, to balance other qualities, more weaknesses than most women. But he must have said more. The answer was not pertinent to the remark, and Henry of Guise is not a man either in speech or action ever to forget his object."

"Nor did he in this instance," replied the Count; "but he said that, wearied out with seeing your best and greatest schemes frustrated by the weakness of others, you now contented yourself with warding off evils as far as possible from your son and from the state; that it was evident that such was your policy; and that, like Miron, the King's physician, unable from external circumstances to effect a cure, you treated the diseases of the times with a course of palliatives; that, as the greatest of all evils, you knew and saw the apathy of his Majesty, and did all that you could to rouse him, but that the poisonous counsels of Villequier, the soft indolence of his own nature, and the enfeebling society of Epernon and others, resisted all

that you could do, and thwarted you here likewise."

"He spoke wisely, and he spoke truly," replied the Queen; "and I will tell you, Monsieur de Logères, though Henry of Guise and I can never love each other much, yet I felt sure that he knew me too well to say all those things of me that have been reported by his enemies. I am satisfied with what I have heard, Count, and shall ask no further questions. But you have given me pleasure, and I will do my best to serve you. Once more, let us speak of other things. Have you all that you desire and want here?"

"No, madam," replied the young Count. "I want many things — liberty, the familiar voices of my friends, the sight of those I love. Every thing that the body wants I have; and you or some of your attendants have supplied me with books and music; but it is in such a situation as this, your Majesty, that one learns that the heart requires food as well as the body or the mind."

"The heart!" replied Catharine de Medici

thoughtfully. "I once knew what the heart was, and I have not quite forgotten it yet. Did you mark my words after you had sung, Monsieur de Logères?"

"You were pleased to praise my poor singing much more than it deserved, madam," replied the young Count.

"Something more than that, my good youth," replied the Queen. "I told you that it had given more pleasure than you knew of. I might have added, that it gave pleasure to more than you knew of, for there was another ear could hear it besides mine."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Count gazing eagerly in the Queen's face; "and pray who might that be?"

"One that loves you," replied Catharine de Medici. "One that loves you very well, Monsieur de Logères." And rising from her chair she put her hand to her brow, as if in deep thought. "Well," she said at length; "something must be risked, and I will risk something for that purpose. The time is not far distant, Monsieur de Logères — I see it

clearly — when by some means you will be set at liberty; but, notwithstanding that, it may be long before you find such a thing even as an hour's happiness. You are a frank and generous man, I believe; you will not take advantage of an act of kindness to behave ungenerously. I go away from you for a moment or two, and leave that door open behind me, trusting to your honour."

She waited for no reply, but quitted the room; and Charles of Montsoreau stood gazing upon the door, doubtful of what was her meaning, and how he was to act. Some of her words might be interpreted as a hint to escape; but others had directly a contrary tendency, and a moment after he heard her unlock and pass another door, and close but not lock it behind her.

CHAP. XI.

"WHAT is her meaning?" demanded Charles of Montsoreau, as he gazed earnestly upon the door; and as he thus thought his heart beat vehemently, for there was a hope in it which he would not suffer his reason to rest upon for a moment, so improbable did it seem, and so fearful would be disappointment. "What is her meaning?" And he still asked himself the question, as one minute flew by after another, and to his impatience it seemed long ere she returned.

But a few minutes elapsed, however, in reality, ere there were steps heard coming back, and in another minute Catharine de Medici again appeared, saying, "For one hour, remember! For one hour only!"

There was somebody behind her, and the

brightest hope that Charles of Montsoreau had dared to entertain was fully realised.

The Queen had drawn Marie de Clairvaut forward; and passing out again, she closed the door, leaving her alone with her lover. If his heart had wanted any confirmation of the deep, earnest, overpowering affection which she entertained towards him, it might have been found in the manner in which — apparently without the power even to move forward, trembling, gasping for breath — she stood before him on so suddenly seeing him again, without having been forewarned, after long and painful and anxious absence. As he had himself acknowledged, he was ignorant in the heart of woman; but love had been a mighty instructor, and he now needed no explanation of the agitation that he beheld.

Starting instantly forward, he threw his arms around her; and it was then, held to his bosom, pressed to his heart, that all Marie de Clairvaut's love and tenderness burst forth. Gentle, timid, modest in her own nature as she was, love and joy triumphed over all. The agony of

mind she had been made to suffer, was greater than even he could fancy, and the relief of that moment swept away all other thoughts: the tears, the happy but agitated tears, flowed rapidly from her eyes; but her lips sought his cheek from time to time, her arms clasped tenderly round him, and as soon as she could speak, she said, "Oh Charles, Charles, do I see you again? Am I, am I held in your arms once more; the only one that I have ever loved in life, my saviour, my protector, my defender. For days, for weeks, I have not known whether you were living or dead. They had the cruelty, they had the barbarity not even to let me know whether you had or had not escaped the plague. They have kept me in utter ignorance of where you were, of all and of every thing concerning you." And again she kissed his cheek, though even while she did so, under the overpowering emotions of her heart, the blush of shame came up into her own: and then she hid her eyes upon his bosom, and wept once more in agitation but in happiness.

"As they have acted to you, dearest Marie,"

he replied, " as they have acted to you, so they have acted to me. The day they separated me from you at Epernon, was the last day that I have spoken with any living creature up to this morning. No answers have been returned to my questions; not a word of intelligence could I obtain concerning your fate; and oh, dear, dear Marie, you would feel, you would know how terrible has been that state to me, if you could tell how ardently, how deeply, how passionately I love you." And his lips met hers, and sealed the assurance there.

" I know it, I know it all, Charles," replied Marie. " I know it by what I have felt; I know it by what I feel myself, for I believe, I do believe, from my very heart, that if it be possible for two people to feel exactly alike, we so feel."

" But tell me, dear Marie, tell me," exclaimed her lover, " tell me where you have been. Have they treated you kindly? Does the Duke of Guise know where you are?"

" Alas, no, Charles!" replied Marie de Clairvaut; " he does not, I grieve to say. Well treated indeed I may say that I have been, for

all that could contribute to my mere comfort has been done for me. Nothing that I could desire or wish for, Charles, has been ungiven, and I have ever had the society of the good sisters in the neighbouring convent. But the society that I love has of course been denied me; and no news, no tidings of any kind have reached me. I have lived in short with numbers of people surrounding me, as if I were not in the world at all, and the moment that I asked a question, a deep silence fell upon every one, and I could obtain no reply."

"This is strange indeed," said Charles, "very strange. However, we must be grateful that our treatment has been kind indeed in some respects."

"Oh, and most grateful," replied Marie de Clairvaut, "for these bright moments of happiness. Do you not think, Charles, do you not think, that perhaps the Queen may kindly grant us such interviews again?"

Who is there that does not know how lovers while away the time? Who is there that has not known how short is a lover's hour? But with

Charles of Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut that hour seemed shorter than it otherwise would have done; for it was not alone the endearing caress, the words, the acknowledgments, the hopes of love, but they had a thousand things in the past to tell each other; they had cares and fears, and plans and purposes for the future, to communicate.

Even had not all shyness, all timidity been done away before, that was not a moment in which Marie de Clairvaut could have affected aught towards her lover; so that what between tidings of the past and thoughts of the future, and the dear dalliance of that spendthrift of invaluable moments, love, an envious clock in some church-tower hard by, had marked the arrival of the last quarter of an hour they were to remain together, ere one tenth part of what they had to think of or to say was either thought or said. The sound startled them, and it became a choice whether they should give up the brief remaining space to serious thoughts of the future, or whether they should yield it all to love. Who is it with such a choice before him that ever hesitated long?

The space allotted for their interview had drawn near its close, and the very scantiness of the period that remained was causing them to spend it in regrets that it was not longer, when suddenly the general sounds which came from the streets became louder and more loud, as if some door or gate had been opened which admitted the noise more distinctly. Both Marie de Clairvaut and her lover listened, and almost at the same instant loud cries were heard of "The Duke of Guise! The Duke of Guise! Long live the Duke of Guise! Long live the great pillar of the Catholic church! Long live the House of Lorraine!" And this was followed by the noise and trampling of horses, as if entering into a court below.

Marie and her lover gazed in each other's faces, but she it was that first spoke the joyful hopes that were in the heart of both.

"He has come to deliver us!" she cried. "Oh Charles, he has come to deliver us! Hear how gladly the people shout his well-loved name! Surely they will not deceive him, and tell him we are not here."

"Oh no, dear Marie," replied her lover; "he has certain information, depend upon it, and will not be easily deceived. He has already discovered my abode, dear Marie; and this letter was thrown through the window this morning, though I myself know not where we are — that is to say, I am well aware that we are now in Paris, but I know not in what part of the city."

"Oh, that I discovered from one of the nuns," replied Marie. "We are at the house of the Black Penitents, in the Rue St. Denis. I remember the outside of it well; a large dark building with only two windows to the street. Do you not remember it? You must have seen it in passing."

"I am not so well acquainted with the city as you are, dear Marie," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "but, depend upon it, where they have confined me is not in the house of the Black Penitents. It would be a violation of the rules of the order which could not be."

"It communicates with their dwelling," replied Marie de Clairvaut; "of that at least I am certain; for the Queen, when she brought

me hither, took me not into the open air. She led me indeed through numerous passages, one of which, some ten or twelve yards in length, was nearly dark, for it had no windows, and was only lighted by the door left open behind us. I was then placed in a little room while the Queen went on, and a short time after I heard a voice, that made my heart beat strangely, begin to sing a song that you once sung at Montsoreau; and when I was thinking of you Charles, and all that you had done for me — how you had first saved me from the reiters, and then rescued me from the deep stream, and had then come to seek me and deliver me in the midst of death and pestilence — I was thinking of all these things, when Catherine came back, and without telling me what was her intention, led me hither."

"Hark!" cried Charles of Montsoreau. "They shout again. I wonder that we have heard no farther tidings."

And they both sat and listened for some minutes, but no indication of any farther event took place, and they gradually resumed their

conversation, beginning in a low tone, as if afraid of losing a sound from without. Marie de Clairvaut had already told her lover how she had remained at Epernon for a day or two under the protection of the wife of the Duke, and had been thence brought by her to Paris and placed in the convent at a late hour of the evening; but as the time wore away, and their hopes of liberation did not seem about to be realized, she recurred to the subject of her arrival, saying, "There is one thing which makes me almost fear they will deceive him, Charles. I forgot to tell you, that as we paused before this building on the night that I was brought hither, while the gates were being opened by the portress, a horseman rode up to the side of the carriage and gazed in. There were torches on the other side held by the servants round the gate, and though I could not see that horseman as well as he could see me, yet I feel almost sure that it was the face of the Abbé de Boisguerin I beheld."

"I know he was to return to Paris," said Charles of Montsoreau, "after accompanying my

brother some part of the way back to the château. But fear not him, dear Marie; he has no power or influence here."

"Oh, but I fear far more wile and intrigue," cried Marie de Clairvaut, "than I do power and influence, Charles. Power is like a lion, bold and open; but when once satisfied, injures little; but art is like a serpent that stings us, without cause, when we least expect it. But hark!" she continued again. "They are once more shouting loudly."

Charles of Montsoreau listened also, and the cries, repeated again and again, of "Long live the Duke of Guise! Long live the House of Lorraine! Long live the good Queen Catherine!* Life to the Queen! Life to the Queen!" were heard mingled with thundering huzzas and acclamations. The heart of the young Count

* The progress of the Duke of Guise and the Queen-mother, from the conv ent of the Penitents to the Louvre, was in triumph. "Il y en avoit," says Auvigny, "qui se mettoient à genoux devant lui, d'autres lui baisoient les mains; quelques uns se trouvèrent tr op heureux de pouvoir en passant toucher son habit." A farther account of this famous event is given a few pages farther on.

sank, for he judged that the Duke had gone forth again amongst the people, and had either forgotten his fate altogether in more important affairs, or had been deceived by false information regarding himself and Mademoiselle de Clairvaut.

The cries, which were at first loud and distinct, gradually sunk, till first the words could no longer be distinguished; then the acclamations became more and more faint, till the whole died away into a distant murmur, rising and falling like the sound of the sea beating upon a stormy shore. The young Count gazed in the countenance of Marie de Clairvaut, and saw therein written even more despairing feelings than were in his own heart.

"Fear not, dear Marie," he said pressing her to his bosom. "Fear not; the Duke must know that I am here by this letter; nor is he one to be easily deceived. Depend upon it he will find means to deliver us ere long."

Marie de Clairvaut shook her head with a deep sigh and with her eyes filled with tears. But she had not time to reply, for steps were

heard in the passage, and the moment after the door of the room was opened.

It was no longer, however, the figure of Catherine de Medici that presented itself, but the homely person and somewhat unmeaning face of a good lady, dressed in the habit of a prioress. Behind her, again, was a lay-sister, and beside them both the attendant who was accustomed to wait upon the young Count. The good lady who first appeared looked round the scene that the opening door disclosed to her with evident marks of curiosity and surprise; and, indeed, the whole expression of her countenance left little doubt that she had never been in that place before.

After giving up a minute to her curiosity, however, she turned to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, saying, "I have been sent by the Queen, madam, to conduct you back to your apartments."

"Let me first ask one question," replied Marie de Clairvaut. "Has not the Duke of Guise been here?"

The nun answered not a word.

"We need no assurance of it, dear Marie," said Charles of Montsoreau, hoping to drive the Prioress to some answer. "We know that he has, and must have been deceived in regard to your state and mine."

The Prioress was still silent; and Marie de Clairvaut, after waiting for a moment, added, "If he have been deceived, Charles, woe to those who have deceived him. He is not a man to pass over lightly such conduct as has been shown to me already."

"Madam," said the Prioress, "I have been sent by the Queen to show you to your apartments."

It was vain to resist or to linger. Marie de Clairvaut gave her hand to her lover, and they gazed in each other's faces for a moment with a long and anxious glance, not knowing when they might meet again. Charles of Montsoreau could not resist; and notwithstanding the presence of nun, prioress, and attendant, he drew the fair creature whose hand he held in his gently to his bosom, and pressed a parting kiss upon her lips.

Marie turned away with her eyes full of tears, and leaving her hand in his till the last moment, she slowly approached the door. She turned for one other look ere she departed, and then, dashing the tears from her eyes, passed rapidly out. The door closed behind her, and Charles of Montsoreau alone, and almost without hope, buried his face in his hands, and gave himself up to think over the sweet moments of the past.



It was on the mornin
May, 1588, at about
that a party, consistin
of whom eight were
grooms, appeared at t
though each of those ei
cavalcade were strong ar
prime of life, highly ec
distinguished in appeara
on whom all eyes rested
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tion which might be w
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shone out in every movement, as well as in every look.

The gates of the city were at this time open, and though a certain number of guards were hanging about the buildings on either hand, yet no questions were asked of any one who came in or went out of the city. The moment, however, that the party we have mentioned appeared, and he who was at its head paused for a moment on the inside of the gate and gazed round, as if looking for some one that he expected to see there, one of the bystanders whispered eagerly to the other, "It is the Duke! It is the Duke of Guise!"

All hats were off in a moment; all voices cried, "The Duke! The Duke!" A loud acclamation ran round the gate, and the people from the small houses in the neighbourhood poured forth at the sound, rending the air with their acclamations, and pressing forward round his horse with such eagerness that it was scarcely possible for him to pass along his way. Some kissed his hand, some threw themselves upon their knees before him, some satisfied them-

selves by merely touching his cloak, as if it had saintly virtue in it, and still the cry ran on of "The Duke of Guise! The Duke of Guise! Long live the Duke of Guise!" while every door-way and alley and court-yard poured forth its multitudes, till the people seemed literally to crush each other in the streets, and all Paris echoed with the thundering acclamations.

After that momentary pause at the gates, the Duke of Guise rode on, uncovering his splendid head, and bowing lowly to the people as he went. His face had been flushed by exercise when he arrived, but now the deep excitement of such a reception had taken the colour from his cheek; he was somewhat pale, and his lip quivered with intense feeling. But there was a fire in his eye which seemed to speak that his heart was conscious of great purposes, and ready to fulfil its high emprise; and there was a degree of stern determination on that lordly brow, which spoke also the knowledge but the contempt of danger, and the resolution of meeting peril and overcoming resistance.

Thus passing on amidst the people, and bowing as he went to their repeated cheers, the Duke of Guise reached the convent of the Black Penitents, where for the time the Queen-mother had taken up her abode. The gates of the outer court into which men were suffered to enter were thrown open to admit him; and signifying to such of the crowd as were nearest to the gate that they had better not follow him into the court, the Duke of Guise rode in with his attendants, and the gates were again closed. The servants and the gentlemen who accompanied him remained beside their horses in the court, while he alone entered the parlour of the convent to speak with the Queen-mother.

She did not detain him an instant, but came in with a countenance on which much alarm was painted, either by nature or by art. The Duke at once advanced to meet her, and bending low his towering head, he kissed the hand which she held out to him.

"Alas! my Lord of Guise," she said, "I must not so far falsify the truth as to say that I am glad to see you. Glad, most glad should

I have been to see you, any where but here. But, alas! I fear you have come at great peril to yourself, good cousin! You know not how angry the minds of men are; you know not how much hostility reigns against you in the breasts of many of the highest of the land; you have not bethought you, that on every step to the throne there stands an enemy ——"

"Who shall fall before me, madam," replied the Duke of Guise.

"Till you have reached the throne itself, fair cousin?" said the Queen-mother.

"No, madam, no," answered the Duke of Guise eagerly. "I thought your Majesty had known me better. I have always believed that you were one of those who felt and understood that I never dreamt of wronging my master and my king, or of snatching, as you now hinted, the crown from its lawful possessor."

"I *have* felt it, and I *have* understood it, cousin of Guise," replied Catharine de Medici. "But, alas! my Lord, I know how ambition grows upon the heart. It begins with an acorn, Guise, but it ends with an oak. Those that

watch it, the very soil that bears it, perceive not its increase; and yet it soon overshadows all things, and root it out who can!"

"Madam," answered the Duke of Guise, boldly, "to follow the figure that you have used, the axe soon reduces the oak; and may the axe be used on me, and ease me of earth's ambition for ever, if any such designs as have been attributed to me exist within my bosom! You see, madam, I meet you boldly, look to ultimate consequences of ambitious designs, and fear not the result. It is such accusations that I come to repel, and it is those who have propagated them, and instilled them both into the mind of his Majesty, and, as it would appear, your own, that I come to punish. Trusting that, humble though I be, your Majesty was the best friend I had at the court of France, I have ridden straight hither, without even stopping at my own abode, to beseech you to accompany me to the presence of the King."

"I do believe, cousin of Guise, that I am your best friend at the court of France," replied the Princess. "In fact, I may say, I know

that none there loves you but myself. Nor must you think that I accuse you of actual ambition, or believe the rumours that have been circulated against you. I merely wish to warn you of the growth of such things in your own bosom."

"Dear madam," replied the Duke, "had I been ambitious, what might I not have become? Here am I simply the Duke of Guise; a poor officer, commanding part of the King's troops, and contributing no small part of my own to swell his forces; with scarcely a place, a post, a government, an emolument, or a revenue, except what I derive from my own estates. Am I the most ambitious man in France? Am I so ambitious as he who adds, to the government of Metz, the government of Normandy, and piles upon that Touraine, Anjou, Saintonge, the Angoumois, seizes upon the office of High-admiral, creates himself Colonel-general of the Infantry? This, lady, is the ambitious man; but of him you seem to entertain no fear."

"There are two ambitions, my Lord Duke," replied the Queen: "the ambition which grasps

at power, and the ambition which snatches at wealth: the moment that ambition mingles itself with avarice, the grovelling passion, chained in its own sordid bonds, is no longer to be feared. It is where the object is power; where there is a mind to conceive the means, and a heart to dare all the risks, that there is indeed occasion for apprehension and for precaution. Still, my Lord, I believe you; still I believe that the hand of Guise will never be raised to pull down the bonnet of Valois. You may strip the minion Epernon of the golden plumes with which he has decked his mid-air wings, for aught I care or think of; you may cast down the dark and plotting Villequier, and sweep the court of apes and parrots, fools and villains, and the whole tribe of natural and human beasts, without my saying one word to oppose you, or without my dreaming for a moment that you aim at higher things; you may even soar higher still, and like your great father become at once the guide and the defender of the state, and still I will not fear you. But Guise," she added in a softer

tone, "I must and will still fear *for* you; and though I will go with you to the King if you continue to demand it, yet I tell you, and I warn you, that every step you take is perilous, and that I cannot be your safeguard nor your surety for a moment!"

"Madam, I must fulfil my fate," replied the Duke of Guise looking up. "I came here to justify myself; I came here to deliver and to support my friends; I came here to secure honour and safety to the Catholic Church; and did I know that the daggers of a hundred assassins would be in my bosom at the first step I took beyond those gates, I would go forth as resolutely as I came hither."

"Then I must send to announce your coming to the King," said the Queen. "Of course I cannot take you to the Louvre unannounced."

Thus saying she quitted the room for a moment, and the Duke remained behind with his arms crossed upon his bosom in deep thought. She returned in a moment, however, saying that she had sent one of her gentlemen upon the errand, and the next minute as the gates were

opened for some one to go out, long and reiterated shouts of "A Guise! A Guise! Long live the Guise!" were heard echoing round the building.

Catharine de Medici smiled and looked at the Duke. "How often have I heard," she said, "those same light Parisian tongues exclaim the name of different princes! I remember well, Guise, when first I came from my fair native land, how the glad multitude shouted on my way; how all the streets were strewed with flowers; and how, if I had believed the words I heard, I should have fancied that not a man in all the land but would have died to serve me; and yet, not long after, I have heard execrations murmured in the throats of the dull multitude while I passed by, and the name of Diana of Poitiers echoed through the streets. Then have I not heard the names of a Francis and a Henry shouted far and wide? and after Jarnac and Moncontour, the heavens were scarcely high enough to hold the sounds of his name who now sits upon the throne of France. To day it is Guise they call upon!—Who shall it be to-morrow? And then another and another

still shall come, the object of an hour's love changed into hatred in a moment."

"It is too true, madam," replied the Duke. "Popularity is the most fleeting, the most vacillating—if you will, the most contemptible—of all those means and opportunities which Heaven gives us to be made use of for great ends. But nevertheless, madam, we must so make use of them all; and as this same popularity is one of the briefest of the whole, so must we be the more ready, the more prompt, the more decided in taking advantage of the short hour of brightness. I may be wrong in thinking," he continued after the pause of a moment or two, "I may be wrong in thinking that my well-being and that of the state and church of this realm are intimately bound up together. It may be, and probably is, a delusion of human vanity. Nevertheless, such being my opinion, none can say that I am wrong in taking advantage of the moment of my popularity to do the best that I can both for the church and for the state. Such, I assure you, madam, is my object; and if I benefit myself at all in these

transactions, it can be, and shall be, but collaterally; while in the mean time I incur perils which I know and yet fear not."

Thus went on the conversation between the Queen and the Duke of Guise for nearly half an hour, at the end of which time the gentleman who had been dispatched to the King returned, bearing his Majesty's reply, which was, that since his mother desired it, she might bring the Duke of Guise to his presence, and Catherine prepared immediately to set out. Her chair was brought round; and after speaking a few words with the superior of the convent, she placed herself in the vehicle, the Duke of Guise walking by her side. The gentlemen who had come with him gave their horses to the grooms, and followed on foot; and several servants and attendants ran on before to clear the way through the people.

The moment the gates were opened, a spectacle struck the eyes of the Queen and the Duke, such as no city in the world perhaps, except Paris, could produce. In the short period which had elapsed since the Duke's arrival, the news

had spread from one end of the capital to the other, and the whole of its multitudes were poured out into the streets or lining the windows, or crowning the house-tops. With a rapidity scarcely to be conceived, scaffoldings had been raised in that short space of time in different parts of the streets, to enable the multitude to see the Duke better as he passed*; in many places, velvets and rich tapestries were hung out upon the fronts of the houses, as if some solemn procession of the church were taking place; the ladies of the higher classes at the windows, or on their scaffolds, were generally without the masks which they usually wore in the streets; and again, when the gates of the convent opened, and the Queen and the Duke issued forth, the air seemed actually rent with the acclamations of the people, and a long line of waving hats and handkerchiefs was seen all the way up the Rue St. Denis.

The same gratulations as before met the Duke on every side as he passed along; the

* This fact is recorded in every account of the proceedings of that day.

populace seemed absolutely inclined to worship him, and many threw themselves upon their knees as he passed. He looked round upon the dense mass of people, upon the crowded houses, upon the waving hands; he heard from every tongue a welcome, at every step a gratulation, and it was impossible for the heart of man not to feel at that moment a pride and a confidence fit to bear him strongly on his perilous way.

All the way down the Rue St. Denis, and through every other street that he passed, the same scene presented itself, the same acclamations followed him, so that the shouts thundered in the ear of the King as he sat in the Louvre.

At length the Queen and those who accompanied her approached the palace; and in the open space before it, which was at that time railed off, was drawn up a long double line of guards, forming a lane through which it was necessary to pass to the gates. The well-known Crillon, celebrated for his determination and bravery, was at their head; and the Duke of Guise, obliged to pause in order to suffer the chair of the Queen-mother to pass on first,

bowed to the commander, whom he knew and respected.

Crillon scarcely returned his salutation, but looked frowning along the double row of his soldiery. The people, close by the railings, watched every movement, and a murmur of something like apprehension for their favourite ran through them as they watched these signs. But not a moment's pause marked the slightest hesitation in the Duke of Guise. With his head raised and his eyes flashing, he drew forward the hilt of his unconquered sword ready for his hand, and holding the scabbard in his left, strode after the chair of the Queen till the gates of the Louvre closed upon him and his train.

A number of officers and gentlemen were waiting in the vestibule to receive the Queen-mother, who however gave her hand to the Duke of Guise to assist her from her chair. On him they gazed with eyes of wonder and of scrutiny, as if they would fain have discovered what feelings were in the heart of one so hated and dreaded by the King, at a moment when

he stood with closed doors within a building filled with his enemies, and surrounded by soldiers ready to massacre him at a word. But the fire which the menacing look of Crillon had brought into the eyes of the Duke had now passed away, and all was calm dignity and easy though grave self-possession. The eye wandered not round the hall; the lip, though not compressed, was firm and motionless, except when he smiled in saluting some of those around whom he knew, or in speaking a few words to the Queen-mother, whose dress had become somewhat entangled with a mantle of sables which she had worn in the chair.

As soon as it was detached, one of the officers of the household said, bowing low, "His Majesty has commanded me, Madam, to conduct you and his Highness of Guise to the chamber of her Majesty the Queen, where he waits your coming." And he led the way up the stairs of the Louvre to the somewhat extraordinary audience chamber which the King had selected.

Henry, when the party entered, was sitting near the side of the bed, surrounded by several

of his officers, one of whom, Alphonzo d'Ornano by name, whispered something over the King's shoulder with his eyes fixed upon the Duke of Guise.

The words, which were, "Do you hold him for your friend or your enemy?" were spoken in such a tone as almost to reach the Duke himself. The King did not reply, but looked up at the Duke with a frown that was quite sufficient.

"Speak but the word," said Ornano in a lower tone, "speak but the word, and his head shall be at your feet in a minute."

The King measured Ornano and the Duke of Guise with his eyes, then shook his head with somewhat of a scornful smile; and then, looking up to the Duke, who had by this time come near him, he said in a dull heavy tone, "What brings you here, my cousin?"

"My Lord," replied the Duke, "I have found it absolutely necessary to present myself before your Majesty, in order to repel numerous calumnies."

"Stay, cousin of Guise," said the King; and turning to Bellievre, who stood amongst the

persons behind him, he demanded abruptly, "Did you not tell me that he would not come to Paris?"

"My Lord Duke," exclaimed Bellievre, not replying directly to the King's question, but addressing the Duke, "did not your Highness assure me that you would delay your journey till I returned?"

"Yes, Monsieur de Bellievre," replied the Duke. "But you did not return."

"But I wrote you two letters, your Highness," replied Bellievre, "reiterating his Majesty's commands for you not to come to Paris."

"Those letters," replied the Duke of Guise, with a bitter smile, "like some other letters which have been written to me upon important occasions, have, from some cause, failed to reach my hands. Nevertheless, Sire, believe me when I tell you, that my object in coming is solely to prove to your Majesty that I am not guilty either of the crimes or the designs which base and grasping men have laid to my charge. Believe me, that after my devotion to God

and our holy religion, there is no one whom I am so anxious to serve zealously and devotedly as your Majesty. This you will find ever, Sire, if you will but give me the opportunity of rendering you any service."

The King was about to reply, but the Queen-mother, who had advanced and stood by his side, touched his arm saying, "You have not yet spoken to me, my son." And the King turning towards her, she added something in a low voice. The King replied in the same tone; and the Duke of Guise, passing through the midst of the frowning faces ranged around the royal seat, approached the Queen-consort, the mild and unhappy Louisa, and addressed a few words to her of reverence and respect which were gratifying to her ear.

He then turned once more to the King, who seemed to have heard what Catharine de Medici had to say, and having given his reply, sat in moody silence. The Queen-mother stood by with some degree of apprehension in her countenance, as if feeling very doubtful still how the affair would terminate.

The brows of the courtiers were gloomy and undecided, and the few followers of the Duke of Guise ranged at some distance from the spot to which he had now advanced, kept their eyes fixed either on him or on those surrounding the King, as if, at the least menacing movement, they were ready to start forward in defence of their leader.

The only one that was perfectly calm was Guise himself; but he, retreading his steps till he stood opposite the King, again addressed the Monarch saying, "I hope, Sire, that you will give me a full opportunity of justifying myself."

"Your conduct, cousin of Guise," replied the King, "must best justify you for the past; and I shall judge by the event, of your intentions for the future."

"Let it be so," replied the Duke, "and such being the case, I will humbly take my leave of your Majesty, wishing you, from my heart, health and happiness."

Thus saying he once more bowed low, and retired from the presence of the King, followed

by the gentlemen who had accompanied him. Not an individual of the palace stirred a step to conduct him on his way, though his rank, his services, his genius, and his vast renown, rendered the piece of neglect they showed disgraceful to themselves rather than injurious to him. He was accompanied from the gates of the Louvre, however, and followed to the Hôtel de Guise, by an infinite number of people, who ceased not for one moment to make the streets ring with their acclamations.

Nor were these by any means composed entirely of the lowest classes of the people, the least respectable, or the least well-informed. On the contrary, it must, alas! be said, that the great majority of all that was good, upright, and noble in the city hailed his coming loudly as a security and a safeguard.

A number, an immense number, of the inferior nobility of the realm were mingled with the crowd that followed him, or joined the acclaim from the windows. The robes of the law were seen continually in the dense multitude, and almost all the courts had there

numbers of their principal members; while the municipal officers of the city, with the exception of two or three, were there in a mass, accompanied by a large body of the most opulent and respectable merchants.

Thus followed, the Duke of Guise proceeded to his hotel on foot as he came, speaking from time to time with those who pressed near him with that peculiar grace which won all hearts, and smiling with the far-famed smile of his race, which was said never to fall upon any man without making him feel as if he stood in the sunshine.

Already collected on the steps of the Hôtel de Guise, at the news that he was returning from the Louvre, was a group of the brightest, the bravest, the most talented, and the most beautiful of the French nobility, — Madame de Montpensier, Mademoiselle de St. Beuve, the Chevalier d'Aumale, Brissac, and a thousand others. The servants and attendants of his household in gorgeous dresses kept back the crowd with courteous words and kindly gestures; and when he reached the steps that

led to the high doorway of the porter's lodge, on the right of the porte cochère, he ascended a little way amongst his gratulating friends, and then turned and bowed repeatedly to the people, pointing out here and there some of the most popular of the citizens and magistrates, and whispering a word to the nearest attendant, who instantly made his way through the crowd to the spot where the personage designated stood, and in his master's name requested that he would come in and take some refreshment.

When this was over, he again bowed and retired; and while the multitude separated, he walked on into his lordly halls with a number of persons clinging round him, whom he had not seen for months—for months which to him had been full of activity, thought, care, and peril, and to them of anxiety for the head of their race.

As he passed along, however, to a chamber where the dinner which had been prepared for him had remained untouched for many an hour, his eye fell upon a boy dressed in the

habit of one of his own pages; and taking suddenly a step forward, he called the boy apart into a window, demanding eagerly, "Well, have you found your master?"

"I have, your Highness," replied the boy, "and have found means to give him the letter?"

"What!" exclaimed the Duke, "outwitted Villequier, and Pisani, and all! The wit of a page against that of a politician for a thousand crowns!"

"I dressed myself as a girl, your Highness," replied the boy, "and got into the convent, and then through a gate into what is called the rector's court, where Doctor Botholph and the Curé live, and where men are admitted, and women not shut out when they like to go in; and I got talking to the old verger of the church by the side, and he called me a pretty little fool, and said he dared to say I would soon be among the penitents within there; and with that I got him to tell me every thing, and the whole story of the young Count being

brought there at night, and shut up in what are called the rector's apartments."

As he spoke, one or two of the higher class of those whom the Duke had selected from the crowd below, and who felt themselves privileged to present themselves in his private apartments, entered the hall, and instantly caught his eye.

"I cannot speak with you more at present, Ignati," he said, "nor, perhaps, during the whole day, for there is business of life and death before me; but come to me while I am rising to-morrow, and only tell me in the mean time where our poor Logères is, for I know not what convent you mean."

"He is in the rector's court," replied the boy, "close by the convent of the Black Penitents, in the Rue St. Denis."

"By my faith!" exclaimed the Duke in no slight surprise, "I have been there this very day myself, and there the Queen-mother has made her abode for the last ten days. She must be deceiving me; and yet, perhaps, the mighty matters that occupied her mind when I

saw her might have made her forget all other things. However, Logères shall not be long so fettered. Come to me to-morrow, Ignati; come to me to-morrow, as I am rising; and in the mean time, if you can find some means of giving the Count intimation that he is not forgotten, it were all the better."

"I will try, my Lord," replied the boy. And the Duke hurried on to welcome his new guests, making them sit down at table with him, and covering them with every sort of honour and distinction.

CHAP. XIII.

In our dealings with each other there is nothing which we so much miscalculate as the ever varying value of time, and indeed it is but too natural to look upon it as it seems to us, and not as it seems to others. The slow idler on whose head it hangs heavy, holds the man of business by the button, and remorselessly robs him on the king's highway of a thing ten times more valuable than the purse that would hang him if he took it. The man of action and of business whose days seem but moments, forgets in his dealing with the long expecting applicant, and the weary petitioner, that to them each moment is far longer than his day.

The hours, not one minute of which were unfilled to the Duke of Guise, passed slowly over the head of Charles of Montsoreau, and it seemed as if the brief gleam of happiness

which had come across his path had but tended to make the long solitary moments seem longer and more dreary; in fact, to give full and painful effect to solitude and want of liberty, and yet he would not have lost that gleam for all the world.

He thought of it, he dwelt upon it, he called to mind each and every particular; and, though it was crossed, as the memory of all such brief meetings are, with the recollection of a thousand things which he could have wished to have said, but which he had forgotten, and also by many a speculation of a painful kind concerning the visit of the Duke of Guise to the very place in which he was confined, without the slightest effort being made for his liberation, yet it was a consolation and a happiness and a joy to him — one of those blessings which have been stamped by the past with the irrevocable seal of enjoyment, which are our own, the unalienable jewels of our fate, held for ever in the treasury of memory.

Nothing occurred through the rest of the day to call his attention, or to rouse his feel-

ings. He heard the distant murmur, and the shouts of the people from time to time; but the gates were now shut, and the sounds dull, and all passed on evenly till darkness shut up the world. In the mean time he knew — as if to make his state of imprisonment and inactivity more intolerable—that busy actions were taking place without, that his own fate was deciding by the hands of others, that his happiness and that of Marie de Clairvaut formed but a small matter in the great bulk of political affairs which were then being weighed between the two angry parties in the capital, and might be tossed into this scale or that, as accident, or convenience, or policy might direct.

Though he retired to rest as usual, he slept not, and ever and anon when a sort of half slumber fell upon his eyes he started up, thinking he heard some sound, a distant shout of the people, the tolling of a bell, or the roll of some far off drum. Nothing however occurred, and the night passed over as the day.

In the grey of the morning, however, just when the slow creaking of a gate, or the noise

of footsteps here and there breaking the previous stillness, told that the world was beginning to awake, a few sweet notes suddenly met his ear like those of a musical instrument, and in a moment after he heard the same air which the boy Ignati had played with such exquisite skill just before he freed him from his Italian masters.

"A blessing be upon that boy," he cried, as he instantly recognised not only the sounds but the touch. "He has come to tell me that I am not forgotten."

Suddenly, however, before the air was half concluded, the music stopped, and voices were heard speaking, but not so loud that the words could be distinguished. It seemed to the young Count, and seemed truly, that some one had sent the boy away; but though he heard no more, those very sounds had given him hope and comfort.

Driven away by the old verger, who had now discovered the trick which had been put upon him the day before, the boy returned with all speed to the Hôtel de Guise, and, according to

the Duke's order, presented himself in his chamber at the hour of his rising. But the Duke was already surrounded with people, all eager to speak with him on different affairs, and his brow was evidently dark and clouded by some news that he had just heard.

"Send round," he was saying as the boy entered, "Send round speedily to all the inns, and let those who are known for their fidelity be informed that the doors of this hotel will never be shut against any of those who have come to Paris for my service, or for that of the church, as long as there is a chamber vacant within. And you, my good Lords," he continued, turning to some of the gentlemen who surrounded him, "I must call upon your hospitality, also, to provide lodging for these poor friends of ours, whom this new and iniquitous proceeding of the court is likely to drive from Paris. But stay, Bussi," he continued, and his eye fell upon the page as he spoke; "you say you saw the Prévôt des Marchands but a minute ago in the Rue d'Anvoye seeking out the lodgers in the inns, and ordering them to quit

Paris immediately. Hasten down after him quickly, and tell him from Henry of Guise that there is a very dangerous prisoner and a zealous servant of the church lodged in the Rue St. Denis; that he had better drive him forth also; and that, if he wants direction to the place where he sojourns, one of my pages shall lead him thither. You may add, moreover, that if he do not drive him forth, I will bring him forth before the world be a day older."

The Duke of Guise then took the pen from the ink which was standing before him, and, though not yet half-dressed, wrote hastily the few following words to the Queen-mother: —

"Madam,

"I am informed, on authority which I cannot doubt, that my friend, the young Count de Logères, is at present in your hands, kept under restraint in the Rue St. Denis, after having been arrested in the execution of business with which I charged him, while bearing a passport from the King. I beseech you to set him im-

mediately at liberty, and also at once to order that my niece and ward, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, be brought to the Hôtel de Guise without an hour's delay. Let me protest to your Majesty that you have not a more faithful and devoted servant than

"HENRY OF GUISE."

"I will not send this by you, Ignati," said the Duke; "they would laugh at a boy. Here, Mestroit, bear this to the Queen-mother. Say I cast myself at her feet; and bring me back an answer without delay. — Why, how now, St. Paul!" he continued, turning to a gentleman who had just entered. "Your brow is as dark as a thunder-cloud. What has happened now? Shall we be obliged to make our hotel our fortress, and defend it to the last, like gallant men?"

"Not so, my Lord," replied the Count of St. Paul; "not near so bad as that: but still these are times that make men look thoughtful; and, depend upon it, the King, aided by his minions

and the Politics*, is seeking to inclose your Highness, as it were in a net."

"We will break through, St. Paul! We will break through!" replied the Duke with a smile. "But what are your tidings?"

"Why, that orders have been sent to the Swiss to come up from Corbeil, as well as those from Meulan and Château Thierry; also the companies of French guards from every quarter in the neighbourhood are called for, and I myself saw come in, by the Faubourg St. Germain, a body of two hundred horse, which, upon inquiry, I found to be a new levy from some place in the South, led by a young Marquis of Montsoreau, whose name I never heard of before."

"Whenever you hear it again, St. Paul," replied the Duke sternly, "couple with it the word 'Traitor!' and you will do him justice. But what force is it said they are bringing into Paris? What stay you for, Mestroit?" he con-

* That party was so called which affected to hold the balance between the Court and the League, without giving countenance to the Huguenots.

tinued, seeing that the gentleman to whom he had given the letter had not taken his departure. "What stay you for? I would have had you there now. Go with all speed! There are horses enough saddled in the court. I would give a thousand crowns that letter should be in the Queen's hand before this youth's coming is known to her. It may save us much trouble hereafter. Fail not to bring me an answer quick. Now, St. Paul, how many men say you on your best judgment are they bringing into Paris?"

"Why, your Highness," replied the Count, "some say ten thousand; but, to judge more moderately from what I hear, the moment your Highness's arrival in Paris was known, orders were sent for the march of full seven thousand men."

"We must be very formidable creatures, Brissac," cried the Duke, "that my coming with seven of you should need seven thousand men to meet us. On my soul, they will make me think myself a giant. I always thought I was a tall man — some six foot three, I believe — but,

by Heavens! I must be a Gargantua, indeed, to need seven thousand men to hold me. Seven thousand men!" he added thoughtfully: "he has not got them, St. Paul. There are not five thousand within fifty miles of Paris, unless Epernon and Villequier have contrived to raise more of such Montsoreaus against us. However, we must have eyes in all quarters. Send out parties to watch the coming of the troops and give us their numbers. Let some one speak to the inferior officers of the French guards, and remind them that the Duke of Guise and the Holy League are only striving for the maintenance of the true faith, and for the overthrow of those minions who have swallowed up all the honours and favours of the crown. It were well also, Brissac, that a good watch was kept upon the proceedings in the city. I can trust, methinks, to The Sixteen to do all that is necessary in their different quarters, and to make full reports of all that takes place; but still a military eye were as well here and there, from time to time. Brissac, and I will trust that to you."

The rest of the morning passed in the same incessant activity with which it had begun; tidings were constantly brought in from all parts of the town and the country round concerning every movement on the part of the court; and the hotel of the Duc de Guise was literally besieged by his followers and partisans. Train after train of noblemen and officers, of lawyers and citizens, followed each other during the whole day, each bringing him information, or claiming audience on some account. Nor were the clergy less numerous; for scarce a parish in the capital but sent forth, in the course of that day, its train of priests and monks to congratulate him on his arrival, or to beseech him to hold up the tottering church of France with a strong hand.

At the same time, the order which had been given by the King in the morning, for every stranger not domiciled in Paris to quit it within six hours, and the proceedings of the Prévôt des Marchands to execute that order had — by driving out of the inns and taverns the multitudes of the Duke's partisans who had followed

him in scattered bodies into Paris — now filled the Hôtel de Guise with all those of the higher classes who were thus expelled. The houses of other members of the faction received the rest. But the stables of the hotel were all filled to the doors; the great court itself could scarcely be crossed, on account of the number of horses; and more than once the street became impassable from the multitude of carriages, chairs, horses, and attendants, who were waiting while their masters conferred with the Duke.

It was near mid-day when the gentleman who had been dispatched to Catharine de Medici again presented himself; and the Duke demanded, somewhat impatiently, what had detained him so long.

"It was the Queen-mother, your Highness," replied Mestroit. "More than an hour passed before I could obtain an audience; and when I was admitted to present your Highness's letter, I found Monsieur de Villequier with her."

"Did she show the letter to that son of Satan?" demanded the Duke.

"No, sir," replied the other; "on the contrary, she seemed not to wish that he should see it, for she kept it tight in her hand after she had read it, and told me to wait a moment, that she would give me an answer directly."

"I would sooner unriddle the enigma of the sphynx," said the Duke, "than I would say from what motive any one of that woman's acts proceed; and yet she has a great mind, and a heart not altogether so vicious as it seems. What happened then, Mestroit?"

"Why, my Lord, Villequier seemed anxious to know what the letter contained, and I saw his head a little raised, and his eyes turned quietly towards it while she was reading, as I have seen a cat regard a mouse-hole towards which she was stealing upon tiptoes; and he lingered long, and seem inclined to stay. The Queen, however, begged him not to forget the orders she had given, but to execute them instantly; and then he went away. When he was gone, the Queen again read your Highness's letter, and replied at first, 'The Duke asks what is not in my power. Tell my noble

cousin of Guise that he has been misinformed; that I hold none of his friends in my power — Then, after a moment, she bade me wait, and she would see what persuasion would do?"

"She must not think to deceive me!" replied the Duke of Guise. "But what more?"

"She went away," replied the gentleman, "and was absent for full two hours, leaving me there alone, with nothing to amuse me but the pages and serving women that came and looked at me from time to time as at a tiger in a cage. At length she came back, and bade me tell your Highness these exact words: 'My cousin has been misinformed. I have none of his people in my hands, or in my power. The Count of Logères, however, shall be set free before eight and forty hours are over. He may be set free to-morrow; but by leaving him for a few hours more where he is, I trust to accomplish for the Duke that which he demands concerning his ward, although I have no power whatever in the matter."

"There is nothing upon earth," said the Duke thoughtfully, "so convenient as to have

the reality without the name of power. We have the pleasure without the reproach! Catharine de Medici has not the power! —Who then has? — I may have the power also, it is true, to right myself and those who attach themselves to me; and in this instance I will use it. But still it were better to wait the time she states; for I know her fair Majesty well, and she never yields any thing without a delay, to make what she grants seem more important:—and yet, the day after to-morrow — the day after to-morrow —who shall say what may be, ere the day after to-morrow comes? This head may be lowly in the dust ere then."

"Or circled with the crown of France," said the Count de St. Paul.

"God forbid!" exclaimed the Duke earnestly. If I thought that it would ever produce a scheme to wrest the sceptre from the line that rightfully holds it, I would bear it to-morrow to the foot of the throne, myself, as my own accuser. No, no! bad kings may die or be deposed: but there is still some one on whose

brow the crown descends by right. And let him have it.

"The Cardinal of Bourbon, your Highness," said an attendant entering, "has just arrived from Soissons. His Eminence is upon the stairs coming up."

A smile played over the lips of most of the persons present at such an announcement at that moment, for every one well knew that it was to the old Cardinal de Bourbon that the party of the League looked, as the successor to the crown on the death of Henry III., to the exclusion of the direct line of Navarre, held to be incapable of succeeding on account of religion. The Duke, however, advanced immediately with open arms to meet the Cardinal, and many hours were passed in long conferences between them and the principal officers and supporters of the League.

At the end of that time, however, towards seven o'clock, a message was brought into the room where they were in consultation, from Monsieur de Sainctyon, a well-known adherent of the League, begging earnestly to speak with

the Duke upon matters of deep importance. On the Duke going out, he found the worthy Leaguer in a state of great excitement and agitation.

"My Lord," he said, as soon as Guise appeared in the room where he had been left alone, "I fear that they are busily labouring, at the palace, for the destruction of your Highness and of the Holy League."

"How so, Monsieur de Sainctyon?" demanded the Duke, who entertained doubts, it seems, of the Leaguer's sincerity, which were never wholly removed. "Some of my friends have just returned from the palace, who tell me that all is as still and quite as the inside of a vault."

"They told your Highness also, I hope," said the Leaguer, "that they had trebled the guard, both Swiss and French."

"Yes, I was informed of that," replied the Duke. "But that shows fear, not daring, Monsieur de Sainctyon."

"Perhaps so, my Lord," replied Sainctyon, who was one of the échevins, or sheriffs of the town; "but perhaps not. However, what I

have now to tell, shows more daring than fear. We were summoned this afternoon at five o'clock to the Hôtel de Ville, where we found not only Pereuse, the Prévôt, and Le Comte, who is worse than a Politic, and half a Huguenot, but the Marquis d'O——"

"Who is worse," said the Duke of Guise, "than minion, or Politic, or Huguenot, or reiter, equally foul in his debaucheries and his peculations; equally impudent in his vices and his follies; fit son-in-law of Villequier; well-chosen master of the wardrobe to the King of France! Who was there besides, Monsieur de Sainctyon? Some expedient infamy was of course to be committed, otherwise d'O—— would not have been there."

"There were a number of captains and colonels of the different quarters," replied Sainctyon, well pleased to see that the Duke now felt the importance of his intelligence, "and the Prévôt and Le Comte began to speak what seemed to me at first simple nonsense, in a confused way, saying, that it was necessary to keep guard in a very different manner in Paris from



to meet with their companies
particular place, in order to
But I replied, that nothing
dangerous than that which
that the companies of armed
much better as usual, each
quarter, taking care of the
than meeting altogether in
armed men, which was likely
immediately. A number of
cried out the same thing;
sieur d'O—— cut us all sh
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the Prévôt has stated to yo
King, and he *must* be obeyed.
meeting is the Cemetery of t
there you are all expected to

trust, for counsel and direction in this business, assuring you that we have heard it is the intention of the Court to pick out from amongst us thus assembled six or seven of your most zealous friends and supporters, and execute them early to-morrow in the Place de Grève."

The Duke paused and thought for a moment ere he replied; but he then said, "I thank you most sincerely, Monsieur de Sainctyon, for the intelligence you have brought me. You are mistaken, however, with regard to what are the intentions of the Court, as you will see in one moment. The large body of men in arms which you will have with you when all assembled together, trebles the number of any force in Paris, so that the least attempt to do you wrong at that moment would be a signal for the overthrow of the monarchy. On the contrary, Monsieur de Sainctyon, I believe the thus calling you together in one place has solely for its object to remove you from the quarters where your presence would be useful in opposition to the iniquitous proceedings of your enemies. To arrest somebody — perhaps

myself—is doubtless the object of these persons; and if you would follow my advice, the course you pursue would be this, — to meet as you have been ordered by the King, having first communicated all the facts to the persons under your command whom you can trust. Some one will come to bring you farther orders, depend upon it; find out what those orders are, and let them instantly be communicated to me; but on no account or consideration suffer yourselves to be kept together in one place. On the contrary, as soon as you have discovered as far as possible what the designs of your enemies are, lead your companies to their different quarters, or wherever you may think best to station them. If you want any farther assistance, send hither; and I will dispatch experienced officers to take counsel with you as to what is to be done. I hope your opinion coincides with mine, Monsieur de Sainctyon."

"Your words always carry conviction with them, my Lord," replied the sheriff; "and I will instantly proceed to obey you."

Thus saying he took his leave, and quitted

the Duke, hastening with the rest of the officers of the city to arm himself cap-a-pie, and present himself with the burgher guard in the Cemetery of the Innocents at the appointed hour.

When that hour arrived, every thing through the rest of the city was dark and silent, and but little light shone from the dim lanterns round the Cemetery upon the dark masses of armed men that now surrounded it. The officers commanding them looked in each other's faces, as if expecting that some one amongst them had orders in regard to what they were farther to do, but for several minutes no one announced himself as empowered to direct them, and they had even proposed to separate, when the sheriff Le Comte arrived on horseback at great haste from the side of the Louvre. Having called the colonels of the quarters together he said, "The King, having been informed that this night an enterprise is to be undertaken against his authority by his enemies, trusts entirely to his citizens of Paris for the defence of the capital, and consequently commands you, in order to have a strong point of

resistance, to occupy this Cemetery, of which I have here the keys, till to-morrow morning. All the gates will be shut except one wicket, and in a very short time the Marquis de Beauvais Nangis, an experienced officer, will be sent down by the King to command you." *

A murmur ran through the officers and through the men, who, as Le Comte spoke loud, heard every word that passed; but an old captain of one of the quarters burst forth, a moment after, exclaiming, "What, shut myself up there, as if in a prison? They must think me mad! Not I, indeed, for any of them! I have nothing to do with you, Monsieur le Comte, nor with any of you, except with the inhabitants of my own quarter, and there I shall go directly. Those may go and shut themselves up with you that like. Come, my men; march! Who gave Beauvais Nangis a right to command me, I should like to know? Not the citizens of Paris,

* This most absurd and impudent proposal would scarcely be credited, were it not to be found in the *Histoire très veritable, &c.*, written by Sainctyon himself, and published by Michel Jouin in the very year 1588.

I'm sure: so those may obey him that like him." And putting himself at the head of his men, he marched out, followed by almost all the other companies except one or two, who suffered themselves to be persuaded to enter into the Cemetery, where they were locked up by Le Compte, to await whatever fate might befall them.

In the mean time the other officers of the burgher guard held a consultation together, and determined, instead of proceeding immediately to their different quarters to occupy the principal points of the city, where they fancied that attempts might be made upon the life or liberty of the chiefs of the League. The avenues to the Hôtel de Guise were strongly guarded, the Rue St. Denis was patrolled by a large party, two companies occupied the Rue St. Honoré, and the utility of these precautions was strongly demonstrated ere they had been long taken.

Before midnight the sound of horses was heard by the two companies in the Rue St. Honoré, and in a moment after appeared the

Marquis d'O——, with as many horse arquebusiers as could be spared from the palace. The citizens stood to their arms and barred the way, and d'O——, never very famous for his courage, demanded, in evident trepidation and surprise, what they did there, when they had been ordered to be in the Cemetery of the Innocents?

"We came here to do our duty to our fellow-citizens," replied the same old captain who had spoken before, "and to guard our houses and our property, for which purpose we are enrolled."

"Well, well, you are right," replied the Marquis, evidently confounded and undecided; and turning his horse's rein he rode back by the same way he came, showing evidently that he had been bound upon some attempt which had been frustrated.

About the same time the party in the Rue St. Denis had been drawn towards the further end by the noise of horses and the light of torches; and on advancing they found a number of men on horseback, and a vacant carriage, with two lights before it, just halting at the

Convent of the Black Penitents. The good citizens, however, were in an active and interfering mood, and they determined to inquire into an occurrence which otherwise would have passed over without the slightest notice. The horsemen, however, did not wait for many questions; but, evidently as much surprised and embarrassed as the Marquis d'O——, turned their horses' heads, and made the best of their way out of the street.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

VOL. III.



HENRY OF GUISE:

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

CHAPTER I.

The convent of the Black Penitents was a very different building indeed, and a very different establishment altogether from that which the imagination of the reader may have raised up from the images furnished by dark and mysterious tales of Italian superstition. It was certainly intended to be, and was, in some degree, a place of voluntary penitence for women who conceived that they had led a peculiarly sinful life: but there were two classes of nuns confined there by their own good will, — one of which consisted of persons who

had mingled long with the world, and really led an irregular life therein; while the other comprised a number of young women of high rank, who had never known any thing, either of the pleasures or the vices which the others now fled from, but who, either by a natural feeling of devotion, or the urgency of relations, had devoted themselves at an early period to the cloister.

In point of diet, fasts, prayers, and penances the order was certainly very strict; but the building in itself was any thing but a gloomy one, and a considerable portion of it, attached to the dwelling of the superior, was set apart for the occasional boarders, who took up their abode there, or for such ladies of high rank and station as might wish to absent themselves for a time from the cares and vanities of the world, and retire to a more intimate communion with God and their own heart, than they could enjoy in such a capital as that of France.

Such was the original intention of these apartments, and the destination of the institution altogether; but we well know how every

thing entrusted to human management here is corrupted in process of time. The rooms which at first had been furnished simply, were soon decked with every sort of ornament; the visiter's table, as it was called, was separated from the ordinary board of the refectory; cooks and wine-growers did their best to gratify the palate; and, with the exception of the vowed nuns, those who sought shelter in the convent of the Black Penitents were condemned to but little abstinence, and knew only this difference from the world in general, that they had an opportunity of escaping obtrusive society when they thought fit.

It was in one then of the handsomest apartments of the building—to speak truth, one far handsomer than that occupied by the Queen-mother herself—that Marie de Clairvaut made her abode during the time she was confined in that building. No great restraint, indeed, was put upon her; but the word confinement was justified by the measures taken to prevent her quitting the convent, or holding communication with any one but the nuns themselves.

To this apartment the Prioress led her back again, after putting an end to her interview with Charles of Montsoreau, and though the good lady herself was by no means entirely weaned from the affections of this world, she thought it but befitting to read Mademoiselle de Clairvaut a brief lecture on the necessity of attaching herself to higher objects, and an exhortation to abandon earthly attachments, and dedicate herself to the service of Heaven. She hinted, indeed, that there could not be an order more worthy of entering into than the one of which she was an unworthy member; nor, indeed, one in which so many of the little pleasures of life could be combined with deep devotion.

Marie de Clairvaut was, at that moment, far more inclined to weep than smile; but it was scarcely possible not to feel amused at the exhortation of the Prioress; and certainly the greater degree of knowledge which the young lady had lately acquired of conventual life would have banished from her mind all desire to take those irrevocable vows which she had once looked forward to with pleasure,

even if love had not long before driven all such purposes from her mind.

Glad to be freed from importunity, and left to her own thoughts, she replied nothing to the good mother's words; and, as soon as she was gone, gave up her whole mind to the recollection of the interview which she had just had with him she loved. To her, too, that interview was a source of deep gratification; every memory of it was dear to her; every word that Charles of Montsoreau had spoken came back to her heart like the voice of hope, and giving way to the suggestions of that bright enchantress, she flattered herself with the expectation of seeing him again and again, even if the presence of the Duke of Guise in Paris failed to restore them both to liberty.

Previously to that period, she had been accustomed to see the Queen almost every day, and indeed more than once during the day; but, during the whole of that evening she saw her not again, and though she eagerly asked the next morning to be admitted to the presence of Catherine de Medici, the only answer that she obtained

was, that though the Princess was expected again in the evening, she had not yet returned from the palace.

The second day passed as the first had done, but during the morning of the third the excitement of the city had communicated itself even to the inmates of the convent. The portress, the lay sisters, the visiters, obtained the news of the hour from those without, and communicated it to the nuns within. Nor did two of those nuns, who had entered into some degree of intimacy with the fair prisoner, fail to bring her, every half-hour, intelligence of what was passing without.

The first news brought was that the guards in the streets of Paris had been all changed and doubled during the preceding night, and that the Holy League and the Court were in continual agitation, watching each other's movements. One of the nuns whispered that people said, it had been proposed by the Duke of Epernon, to murder the Duke of Guise at the very door of that convent, as he came to visit the Queen-mother; and others declared, she added, that the Duke had vowed he would not rest till he had

taken the crown off Henry's head, and put it on that of the Cardinal de Bourbon.

Then came intelligence that a large body of the Swiss guards had just entered Paris, and were seen marching rapidly down the Rue St. Honoré, with their fifes silent, and their drums still. Hourly after that came the news of fresh troops entering the city, and fresh rumours of manifold designs and purposes against the life of the Duke of Guise. His house was to be attacked by the French and Swiss guards, and his head to be struck off in the Place de Grève: he was to be shot by an assassin, placed at one of the windows of an opposite house, the first time he came out; and some said that Villequier had found means to bribe Lanecque, his cook, to poison him that night at supper, as well as all who were with him.

The various scenes, and the dangers and difficulties which she had lately encountered, had given Marie de Clairvaut a far greater knowledge of the world, and of how the important events of the world take place, than was possessed by any of her companions; and she

assuredly did not believe a thousandth part of all the different rumours that reached her. The reiteration of those rumours, however, gave her some apprehensions for her great relation; and when towards the evening she was visited by the Prioress, and found that, beyond all doubt, every gate of the city, except the porte St. Honoré, was closed, her fears became much greater, seeing plainly that it was the design of the Court to hem the Duke in, within the walls of Paris, deprived, as they believed him to be, of all assistance from his friends without.

The night passed over, however, in tranquillity; and when, at an early hour, the young lady rose, she was informed, as she had expected, that a great part of the rumours of the preceding day were false or exaggerated. No Swiss, it was now said, had arrived, except a very small body; the Duke of Guise had been seen on horseback with the King; and the mind of Marie de Clairvaut became reassured in regard to her uncle. The Prioress herself — though somewhat given to fear, and like many other persons, absolutely enjoying a little apprehen-

sion in default of other excitement — acknowledged that all seemed likely to go well.

But this state of security was soon changed. The report regarding the arrival of the Swiss had only forerun the event by a few hours, for the sound of drums and trumpets heard from the side of the Cemetery of the Innocents towards seven o'clock in the morning, announced to the Parisians that a large body of troops had been introduced in the night, without the city in general knowing it; and in a few minutes after the movements of these forces evidently showed that some grand stroke was to be struck by the Court against its enemies. The Place de Grève was next occupied by a considerable force of mixed Swiss and French guards, favoured in their entrance by the Prevôt des Marchands, and led by the notorious Marquis d'O. Various other points, such as bridges and market-places, were seized upon by the troops; and the greatest activity seemed to reign in the royal party, while that of the Duke of Guise and the League, remained perfectly still and inactive, as if thunderstruck at this sudden display of energy.

News of all these proceedings reached Marie de Clairvaut in the convent, accompanied with such circumstances of confirmation, that she could not doubt that the intelligence was partly true. But for a short time after the troops were posted, every thing seemed to relapse into tranquillity, except that from time to time reports were brought to the convent parlour, of citizens, and especially women, being treated with great insolence and grossness by the soldiery. Crillon himself was heard to swear that any citizen who came abroad with a sword should be hung to his door-post, while worse was threatened to the wives and daughters of the burghers, if the slightest resistance was made to the troops. The portress brought news that all the houses and shops in the Rue St. Denis and the Rue St. Honoré were closed; and the Prioress herself thought it was high time to cause the convent gates to be shut and barred, and even that door which led into what was called the rector's court, and which usually stood open, to be closed and fastened with large chains.

At length tidings were brought that the first

open resistance of the people had commenced; that blood had been shed; and it was rumoured that Crillon himself, attempting to take possession of the Place Maubert with two companies of Swiss and one of French guards, had been opposed by the scholars of the University and the citizen guard, and forced to retreat without effecting his object.

The terror of the Prioress was now extreme; the sound of horses galloping here and there with the most vehement speed, could be heard even in the parlour of the convent, and towards nine o'clock the roll of distant musketry borne by the wind completed the terror of the poor nuns.

It was evident now to Marie de Clairvaut that a struggle had commenced between the Monarch and the people of the capital, on which depended the safety, perhaps the life, of the Duke of Guise, and, in a great degree, her own fate and happiness. In that struggle she could take no part; and, situated as she was, she could gain no relief even from hearing any exact account of how it proceeded from time to time.

The fears of the good superior of the convent had driven her by this time to the resource of prayer. All the nuns were ordered to assemble in the chapel; and Marie de Clairvaut, feeling that none at that moment had greater need of heavenly protection than herself, prepared to follow, after listening for a few minutes, alone in her chamber, to the distant roll of musketry which still went on; when suddenly the Prioress returned in great haste with a paper in her hand, and apparently in much agitation and alarm.

"There, there," she said, thrusting the paper into Marie de Clairvaut's hands, "that is from the Queen! Do what you like! Act as you like! I would not go out for the whole world, for just through the grating I have seen a Swiss officer carried by, all dropping with blood as they bore him along the streets. I will go to prayers; I will go to prayers!"

The note from the Queen-mother was very brief.

"You know, mademoiselle," it said, "that you have not been kept where you are by my

orders. I would fain have set you free two nights ago by any means in my power, if meddling fools on the one side, and cowardly fools on the other, had not frustrated my plan. I have now taken the responsibility upon myself of ordering the gates to be opened to you. The man who brings you this is brave and to be trusted; and what I have to entreat of you is, if I have shown you any kindness, to go with all speed to the hotel of my good cousin of Guise, and beseech him to do his best to allay the tumult, so far, at least, that I myself may come to him with safety. The scenes that you will meet with may be terrible, but you have that blood in your veins which does not easily shrink from the aspect of danger."

Marie de Clairvaut might be more timid than Catherine de Medici believed; but, when she thought of freedom, and of being delivered from the power of those whom she detested, to dwell once more with those she loved, she felt that scarcely any scene would be so terrible as to deter her from seeking such a result. She remarked, however, that the Queen did not once

mention the name of Charles of Montsoreau, or allude to his fate. "What," she asked herself, "is he still to be kept a prisoner, while I am set at liberty? If so, liberty is scarcely worth having."

She paused, and thought for a moment, and then the hope crossed her mind of setting him at liberty herself.

"Surely," she said, "I could trace my way back to his apartments. I remember every turning well; and then, by bringing him through here, in the confusion and terror that now reign in the convent, I could easily give him his liberty too."

The more she thought of it, the more feasible the scheme seemed to be; and catching up an ordinary veil to throw over her head, she ran down into the apartments of the Queen, which she found, as she expected, quite vacant. She had no difficulty in discovering the corridor that led towards the rector's court. At the end there was a door which was locked, but the key was in it, and she passed through. Another short passage led her to the room where she had waited for the Queen, and where she had

listened to Charles of Montsoreau singing; and then with a beating and an anxious heart she hurried on rapidly to the chamber where she had seen him last.

All the bolts were shot, showing her that he was still there; but exactly opposite was an open door at the top of a small staircase, which seemed to lead to a waiting-room below, for she could distinctly hear the tones and words of two men of the lower class talking over the events that were taking place without.

Gently closing the door at the top of the stairs, Marie de Clairvaut locked and bolted it as quietly and noiselessly as possible. Her heart beat so violently, however, with agitation, that she could scarcely hear any thing but its pulsation, though she listened breathlessly to ascertain if the slight noise of the lock had not attracted attention. All was still, however, and she gently undid the fastenings of the opposite door.

Charles of Montsoreau was seated at the table, and lifted his eyes as she entered with a sad and despairing look, expecting to see no one but the attendant. Marie was in his arms

in a moment, however, and holding up her finger to enjoin silence, she whispered, "Not a word, Charles; but come with me, and we shall be safe! Every one is in the chapel at prayers; orders are given for my liberation; and in five minutes we may be at the Hôtel de Guise."

"What are all those sounds," demanded her lover in the same tone, "those sounds which I have heard in the streets? I thought I heard the discharge of firearms."

"I fear," she answered, "that it is my uncle's party at blows with that of the King. I know but little myself, however; only that we may make our escape if we will. I will lead you, Charles; I will lead you this time."

"Alas!" said Charles of Montsoreau as he followed her rapidly, "they have taken my sword from me;" but Marie ran on with a step of light, taking care however to lock the doors behind them as she passed to prevent pursuit.

As she had never been in the courtyard since the day of her first arrival, she met with some difficulty in finding her way thither

from the Queen's apartments: haste and agitation indeed impeding her more than any real difficulty in the way. At length, however, it was reached, and was found vacant of every one but the old portress, who stood gazing through a small iron grating at what was passing without.

"Open the door, my good sister," said Marie de Clairvaut touching her arm. "Of course the Prioress has given orders for you to let me pass."

"Yes, to let you pass, my sister," replied the portress, "for I suppose you are the young lady she meant; but not to let any body else pass." And she ran her eye over the figure of Charles of Montsoreau."

"Why, surely," replied Marie de Clairvaut, "you would not stop the gentleman who is going to protect me through the streets."

"Why, I do not know," replied the portress, still sturdily setting her face against their passage; "there was another person waiting on the outside to show you the way, till just a minute ago. Where he's gone, I don't know, but he seemed the fitter person of the two, for he was

an ecclesiastic. I have heard, too, of some one being confined up above, by Monsieur Villequier's orders, and as the rector's court belongs to him, they say I must take care what I am about; so I'll just ring the bell and inquire."

"I will save you the trouble of doing that, my good lady," replied Charles of Montsoreau; and stepping quietly forward, he put her gently but powerfully back with his left hand, while with his right he turned the key in the great lock of the wicket, and threw it open. The portress made a movement of her hand to the bell; but then thinking better of it, did not ring; and Marie and her lover, without further opposition, passed at once into the streets of Paris.

There were very few people in the Rue St. Denis, but on looking up and down on either side, there were seen a party of horsemen, apparently halted, at the farther end of the street, on the side nearest to the country, and a number of persons farther down, passing and repassing along one of the cross streets. Some way farther up, between the fugitives and the

party of horsemen we have mentioned, were two figures, one of which was evidently dressed in the robes of an ecclesiastic, and both gazing down towards the convent, as if watching for the appearance of some one.

The moment the young Count and Marie de Clairvaut appeared, the two figures walked on rapidly in a different direction, and were lost immediately to their sight by turning down another street. There was nothing apparent that could alarm the fugitives in any degree, and though distant shouts and cries were borne upon the air, yet the sound of musketry had ceased, which gave greater courage to Marie de Clairvaut. She needed indeed some mitigation of her apprehensions, for the success which she met with in rescuing her lover had been far from increasing her courage in the same proportion that it had been diminished by the very agitation she had gone through. Drawing the thick veil over her face, and as far as possible over her person, she clung to Charles's arm, and hurried on with him, directing him as far as her recollection of the city of Paris would

serve. It was long, however, since she had seen it; and although the general direction which she took was certainly right, yet many a turning did she unnecessarily take by the way.

Still, however, they hurried on, till turning suddenly into one of the small streets which led round into the Rue St. Honoré itself, the scene of fierce contention which was going on in the capital was displayed to their eyes in a moment.

Across the street, within fifty yards of the turning, was drawn an immense chain from post to post, and behind it was rolled an immense number of barrels filled with sand and stones, and rendered fixed and immovable, against the efforts of any party in front at least, by carts taken off the wheels, barrows, and paving-stones. Behind this barrier again appeared an immense multitude of men armed with various sorts of weapons snatched up in haste. The front row, indeed, was well furnished with arquebuses, while pistols, swords, daggers, and pikes gleamed in abundance behind. Several of the persons in front were completely armed in the defensive armour of the time; and in a small aperture which had

been left at the corner between the barricade and the houses, sufficient only for two people to pass abreast when the chain was lowered, an officer was seen in command, with a page behind carrying his plumed casque.

The lower windows of all the houses throughout Paris were closed, and the manifold signs, awnings, and spouts, as well as the penthouses which were sometimes placed to keep off the rain and wind from some of the principal mansions, had all been suddenly removed, in order that any bodies of soldiery moving through the streets might be exposed, without a place of shelter, to the aim of the persons above, who might be seen at every window glaring down at the scene below. There too were beheld musketoons, arquebuses, and every other sort of implement of destruction; and where these had not been found, immense piles of paving-stones had been carried up to cast down upon the objects of popular enmity.

Between the two fugitives and the barricade were drawn up two companies of Swiss and one of French infantry; and though standing

in orderly array, and displaying strongly the effects of good military discipline, yet there was a certain degree of paleness over the countenances of the men, and a look of hesitation and uncertainty about their officers, which showed that they felt not a little the dangerous position in which they were placed. No shots were fired on either side however, and the only movement was amongst the people, who were seen talking together, with their leaders stirring amongst them, while from time to time those who were below shouted up to those in the windows above.

Without the slightest apparent fear of the soldiers, who were thus held at bay, two or three people from time to time separated themselves from the populace, and coming out under or over the chain, passed completely round the guards to the opposite corner of the street, and appeared to be laying a plan for forming another barricade in that quarter, so as completely to inclose the soldiery.

At the sight of all these objects Marie de Clairvaut naturally clung closer to the arm of

her lover, and both paused for a moment in order to judge what was best to do. An instant's consideration however sufficed, and Charles of Montsoreau led her on to that part of the barricade where the chain was the only obstacle to their further progress, passing as he did so along the whole face of the French and Swiss soldiers, not one of whom moved or uttered a word to stop them as they proceeded. At the chain, however, they met with a more serious obstacle. The officer whom they had seen in command at that point had now turned away, and was speaking to some people behind, and a rough-looking citizen, armed with a steel cap and breastplate, dropped the point of his spear to the young Count's breast saying, "Give the word, or you do not pass!"

"I do not know the word," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "But I pray you let me pass, for I am one of the friends and officers of the Duke of Guise,"

"If you were you would know the word,"

replied the man. "Keep back, or I will run the pike into you."

"I could not know the word," answered the young Count, "if I had been long absent from the Duke, as I have been, and were hastening to join him, as I now am."

"Keep back, I say," cried the man who was no way fond of argument. "You will repent if you do not keep back."

Charles of Montsoreau was about to call to the officer he saw before him, but at that moment the other walked on amidst the people, and was seen no more.

"Let us try another street," cried Marie de Clairvaut; "let us try another street, Charles." And following this suggestion they hurried back, and took another street farther to the left.

They now found themselves in a new scene; no soldiers were there, but dense masses of people were beheld in every direction, and barricades formed or forming at every quarter. Where they were not complete the lady and her lover passed without difficulty, and almost

without notice. One of the young citizens, indeed, as he helped her over a large pile of stones, remarked that her small feet ran no risk of knocking down the barricade; and an old man who was rolling up a tun to fill a vacant space, paused to let her pass, and gazing with a sort of fatherly look upon her and her lover, exclaimed, "Get ye gone home, pretty one; get ye gone home. Take her home quick, young gentleman; this is no place for such as she is."

These were all the words that were addressed to them till they again reached another barrier; but there again the word was demanded with as much dogged sullenness as ever, and the young Count, now resolved to force his way by some means, determined rather to be taken prisoner by the people and to demand to be carried to the Hôtel de Guise, than be driven from barrier to barrier any longer. He remembered, however, the degree of civility which had been shown to him by Chapelle Marteau some time before, and he demanded of the man who opposed him at the chain if either that per-

sonage or Bussi le Clerc were there. The man replied in the negative, but seemed somewhat shaken in his purpose of excluding him, by his demand for persons so well known and so popular.

At that moment, however, Charles of Montsoreau caught the sight of a high plume passing amongst the people at some distance, and the momentary glance of a face that he recollected.

"There is Monsieur de Bois-dauphin," he cried; "in the name of Heaven call him up here, that he may put an end to all this tedious opposition." The man did not seem to know of whom it was he spoke, but pointing forward with his hand, the young Count exclaimed, "That gentleman with the plume! that gentleman with the tall red plume!"

The word was passed on in a moment, and the officer approached the barrier, when Charles of Montsoreau instantly addressed him by the name of Bois-dauphin, begging him to give them admittance within the barricade, and then adding in a low voice, that he had with him the Duke's ward, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, who

had just made her escape from the enemies of the House of Guise, and was so terrified that she could scarcely support herself any longer.

"You mistake, sir," replied the officer; "I am not Bois-dauphin, but Chamois: but I remember your face well at Soissons; the Count of Logères, if I am right."

The Count gave a sign of affirmation, while Marie de Clairvaut looked up in his face with an expression of joy and relief, and the officer immediately added, "Down with the chain directly, my good friends. You are keeping out the Duke's best friends and relations."

The men round the chain hastened eagerly to obey, but some difficulty was experienced in removing the chain, as the barrels—or barriques, as they are called in France, and from which the barriers called barricades took their name—pressed heavily upon it, and prevented it from being unhooked.

Charles of Montsoreau was just about to pass under with his fair charge as the most expeditious way, when there came a loud cry from the end of the same street by which they

had themselves come thither, of "The Queen! the Queen! Long live the good Queen Catherine!" And rolling forward with a number of unarmed attendants came one of the huge gilded coaches of the time, passing at great risk to itself and all that it contained, through or over the yet incomplete barriers farther up in the street.

At the barricade where Charles of Montsoreau now was, however, the six horses by which the vehicle was drawn were brought to a sudden stop, and notwithstanding her popularity, which, at this time, was not small, the citizens positively refused to remove the barricade, although the Queen entreated them in the tone of a suppliant, and assured them that she was going direct to the Hôtel de Guise. Some returned nothing but a sullen answer, some assured her it was impossible, and would take hours to accomplish; and Monsieur de Chamois, who apparently did not choose to be seen actually aiding or directing the people in the formation of the barricades, retreated amongst the multitude, and left them to act for themselves.

At that moment the eye of Catherine de Medici fell upon Charles of Montsoreau, and she beckoned him eagerly towards her.

"You are here, of course," she said, "upon the part of the Duke."

"Not so indeed, madam," he replied; "I have but this moment made my escape from that place where I have been so long and so unjustly detained."

"Your escape!" she exclaimed in a tone that could not be affected. "Villequier has betrayed me. He promised you should be set at liberty yesterday morning. And you too, Marie," she said looking at the young Count's fair companion. "You surely received the order for your liberation that I sent."

"Safely, madam," replied Marie de Clairvaut, "and thank your Majesty deeply. But they have refused to let us pass at several barriers, otherwise I should certainly have executed your Majesty's commands."

"This is most unfortunate," said the Queen. But pray, Monsieur de Logères, exert your influence with these people as far as possible.

The welfare, perhaps the very salvation of the state, depends upon my speaking with the Duke of Guise directly."

"I will do my best, madam," replied the young Count; "but I fear I shall not be able to do much. I will leave her under your protection, madam, and see."

The Queen made him place Marie de Clairvaut in the carriage beside her; and having done this, he turned to the barrier and spoke to those who surrounded that point where the chain had been lowered to let him pass, with far more effect than he had anticipated. To remove the barricade, the people said, was utterly impossible; but if her Majesty would descend and betake herself to her chair which was seen carried by her domestics behind her, they would do what they could to make the aperture large enough for her to pass.

With this suggestion Catherine de Medici, who had no personal fears, complied at once, and seated herself in the rich gilt-covered chair which followed her. She was about to draw the curtains round her and bid the bearers

proceed, but her eye fell upon Marie de Clairvaut; and after a moment's hesitation between compassion and queenly state, she said, "Poor child, thou art evidently like to drop: come in here with me; there is room enough for thee also, and the Queen is old enough not to mind her garments being ruffled. Quick, quick," she added, seeing Marie hesitate; and without further words the fair girl took her place by the Queen.

Although the chairs of those times were very different in point of size from those which we see (and now alas! rarely see) in our own, yet Mademoiselle de Clairvaut felt that she pressed somewhat unceremoniously on her royal companion; but Catherine de Medici, now that the act was done, smiled kindly upon her, and told her not to mind; and the bearers taking up the chair carried it on, while the populace rolled away one of the tuns to permit its passing through the barricade. The Queen's train of attendants pressed closely round the chair, and Charles of Montsoreau followed amongst them as near as he could to the vehicle, the people shouting as

they went, "Long live the Queen! Long live the good Queen Catherine!"

At all the barriers a way was made for her to pass, but still the multitudes in the streets were so thick, and the obstacles so many, that nearly three quarters of an hour passed, and the Hôtel de Guise was still at some distance.

At length Catherine de Medici drew back the curtains of gilt leather, and beckoned the young Count to approach, saying, as soon as he was near, "Pray, Monsieur de Logères, go on as fast as possible, and let the Duke know that I am coming. I fear that with all these delays he may have gone forth ere I reach his hotel. And hark, Monsieur de Logères," she continued, "if out of pure good will I once afforded you one hour of happiness that you did not expect, remember it now; and should chance serve, speak a word to the Duke in favour of my purposes. You understand? Quick — go on!"

Charles of Montsoreau hastened on at the Queen's bidding, and having now heard the pass-word often repeated amongst the citizens,

met with no opposition in making his way to the Hôtel de Guise. The only difficulty that he encountered was in the neighbourhood of the mansion itself, for the street was so thickly crowded with people and with horses, that it was scarcely possible to approach the gates. Every thing was hurry and confusion too, and the dense mass of people collected in that spot was not like an ordinary crowd, either fixed to one place around the object of their attention, or moving in one direction in pursuit of a general object; but, on the contrary, it was struggling and agitated, by numbers of persons forcing their way through in every different direction, so that it was with the greatest possible labour and loss of time that any one advanced at all. The great bulk of those present were armed, and amidst corslets, and swords, and brassards, heavy boots and long spurs, Charles of Montsoreau, totally unarmed as he was, found the greatest possible difficulty in forcing his way, although, probably, in point of mere personal strength

he was more than equal to any one there present.

Long ere he could reach the gate of the hotel, there was a loud cry of, "The Queen! the Queen! long live Queen Catherine!" And the crowd rolling back, as if by common consent, swept him away far from the spot which he had gained, and nearly crushed him by the pressure. At some distance he caught a sight of the Queen's chair, but it stopped at the edge of the crowd, and the movements that he saw in that part of the mass made him believe that Catherine was descending from the vehicle, intending to proceed on foot.

He doubted not that the Queen's attendants, who were very numerous, would keep off the multitude; and even the rolling back of the people upon himself evinced that they were inclined to show her every respect. But still feeling that all he loved on earth was there, he naturally strove to see over the heads of the people. It was in vain that he did so, however, for between him and the line along which the Queen was passing was a

sea of waving plumes of every height and colour, and all that he could discover was, how far she had proceeded on her way to the gates, by the rush of the people closing up behind her as soon as she had passed.

Just as she was entering the mansion a considerable degree of confusion was created in the crowd by one of the horses, held not far from the place where Charles of Montsoreau stood, either frightened by the noise, or pressed upon by the people, beginning to kick violently. The man whom he first struck was luckily well covered with defensive armour; but he was knocked down notwithstanding, and all the rest rushed back, pressing upon the others behind them in confusion and dismay.

Charles of Montsoreau, however, took advantage of the opportunity to make his way forward; but just as he was so doing he was encountered by the Marquis de Brissac hurrying eagerly forward through the crowd. He was dressed in his ordinary clothes, and armed with nothing but his sword; but there

was fire and eagerness in his eyes, and he seized the young Count by the hand, exclaiming, "I am delighted to have found you, Logères. I wanted a man of action and of a good head. Come with me! come with me quick! or we shall have more mischief done than is at all needful. They have begun firing again! There! — Don't you hear?"

"I hear now," replied the Count, "but I did not pay attention to it before. I would come with you willingly, Monsieur de Brissac, but I wish to see the Duke. He does not know yet that I am at liberty: neither have I a sword."

"The Duke cannot see you now," cried Brissac, still holding the Count by the arm. "The Queen and her people are with him. I will get you a sword. Come with me, come with me. Here, fellow, give the Count your sword." And taking hold of the baldric of one of the men near, he made him unbuckle it, and threw it over the Count's shoulders.

For Brissac, who was well known to almost every body there, the people now made way at least in some degree; and followed by the young

Count he hurried on, till they both could breathe somewhat more at liberty.

In the mean time the sound of the musketry was heard increasing every moment, and Brissac after listening for a moment exclaimed, "It comes from the Marché Neuf. By Heavens! Logères, we must put a stop to this, or they will take up the same music all over the town, and we shall have those poor devils of Swiss slaughtered to a man. Who is that firing at the Marché Neuf?" he demanded at the first barrier they reached.

"Our people," replied the captain of the quarter, "are firing upon the soldiers in the market-place I hear."

"Quick, Arnault; quick!" cried Brissac. "Get the keys of the slaughter-house and bring them after me with all speed! Come on, Logères, come on!" he continued, unable to refrain from a joke even in the exciting and terrible scene that was going on. "The King will find, I am afraid, that he has brought these *pigs* to a bad *market*, as the good ladies of the halle say. We must save as many of them from being butchered

as we can, however." And running on, followed by two or three persons from the different barriers that they passed, they soon reached the corner of the Marché Neuf, where an extraordinary and terrible scene was exposed to their eyes.

The market, which was somewhat raised above a low street that passed by its side, was a large open space, having at that time neither booths nor penthouses to cover the viands, usually there exposed, from the sun: each vendor that thought fit spreading out his own little canvass tent over his goods when he brought them. On the side by which Brissac and Charles of Montsoreau approached, there was a low wall, not a yard high, separating the market from the street which passed by the side, with some steps up to the former, as well as two or three open spaces to give ingress; and on the other side was a long low range of covered slaughter-houses, with tall buildings overtopping them beyond.

In the midst of this open space, cooped in by barricades on every side, and surrounded by

tall houses with innumerable windows, was a body of about eight hundred Swiss. They were standing firm in the midst of the place, forming a three-sided front, with their right and left resting on the slaughter-houses; and while their front rank poured a strong and well-directed but ineffectual fire upon the two barricades opposite, the second rank endeavoured to pick off their assailants at the different windows.

In the meanwhile, however, from those windows and barricades was poured in upon the unhappy Swiss a tremendous fire, almost every shot of which told. The people at the barriers rose, fired, and then bent down again behind their defences, while the men at the windows kept up a still more formidable, but more irregular discharge, sometimes firing almost altogether, as if by common consent, sometimes picking off, here and there, any of their enemies they might fix upon; so that at one moment, the whole sweeping lines of the tall houses were in one blaze of fire and cloud of smoke; and the next, the flashes would drop from window to window, over each face of the square, like some artificial firework.

Such was the scene of confusion and destruction which burst upon the eyes of Brissac and Charles of Montsoreau when they entered the square of the Marché Neuf. The fire of the barrier which they passed was instantly stopped, but in other places it was still going on and Brissac, without the slightest hesitation, jumped at once upon the low wall we have mentioned, and waved his hat in the air, shouting loudly to cease firing. Some cessation instantly took place, but still not altogether; and Charles of Montsoreau, rapidly crossing the market-place to command the men at the opposite barricade to stop, was slightly wounded in the arm by a ball from one of the windows.

It luckily happened that the baldric which had been procured for him by Brissac bore the colours of the League and the cross of Lorraine embroidered on the front; and the defenders of the barrier stopped instantly at his command. When that was accomplished, he turned to rejoin Brissac, and as he went, called to the people at the lower windows of the houses to stop firing in the name of the Duke of Guise;

and to pass the same order up to those above them. The Swiss had ceased immediately, very glad of any truce to an encounter in which fifty or sixty of their number had already fallen, while many more were seriously wounded.

The keys which Brissac had sent for had by this time arrived; and, accompanied by the young Count, he advanced, hat in hand, to the officer in command of the Swiss, who met him half way with a sad but calm and determined countenance.

"You see, sir," said Brissac, "that it is perfectly impossible for you to contend against the force opposed to you."

"Perfectly," replied the officer; "every street is a fortress, every house a redoubt. But we never intended to contend, and indeed had received orders to retire, but could not do so on account of the barricades, when suddenly some shot was fired from behind those buildings; and whether it was a signal to commence the massacre, or whether the people thought that we had fired, I know not, but they instantly began to attack us; and here are

more than sixty of my poor fellows butchered without cause."

"There is only one plan to be pursued, sir," replied Brissac, "in order to save you. You must instantly lay down your arms."

"Were the people opposed to me soldiers, sir," replied the officer, "I would do so at a word; but the people seem in a state of madness, and the moment we are disarmed they might fall upon us all, and butcher us in cold blood — yourself and all, for aught I know."

"I have provided against that, sir," replied Brissac. "Here are the keys of those buildings, which will shelter you from all attack. I must not put in your hands a fortress against the citizens of Paris; so that while you retain your weapons you cannot enter; but the moment you lay down your arms, I will give you that shelter, and pledge my word for your protection.

The joy which spread over the officer's countenance at this offer plainly showed, what neither word nor look had done before, how deeply he had felt the terrible situation in which he was placed.

"It shall be done this instant," he said; and returning to his men, while Brissac unlocked the gates, he made them pile their arms in the market-place, amidst a deafening shout from the people on all sides. The Swiss then marched, rank by rank, into the place of shelter thus afforded them; and Brissac, bowing low to the commander, who entered the last, said with a smile, which the other returned but faintly, "In name, my dear sir, the exchange you are just making is not an agreeable one; but I am sure you will find that this slaughter-house is rather a more comfortable position than the one from which I have just delivered you."

The Marquis then caused a guard of the citizens to be placed over the arms of the Swiss; and turning to Charles of Montsoreau, he said, "Come, let us quick to the new bridge. The King used to say of me, Monsieur de Logères, that I was good for nothing, either on the sea or on the land. I think he will find to-day that I am good for something on the pavement."

Thus saying he led the way back through the barrier; and Charles of Montsoreau, having more leisure now than before to observe the countenances and demeanour of the different people around, could not help thinking that older and more skilful soldiers than the citizens of Paris could boast were busy in directing the operations of the populace in different parts of the city. The scene was a strange and extraordinary one altogether; the streets were absolutely swarming with people, and crowds were hurrying hither and thither through every open space, but were still kept in dense masses by the constant obstruction of the barricades.

Hastening on through the midst of these masses with Brissac, the young nobleman's eye ran hastily over all the crowds that he passed, when suddenly, at the end of one of the largest streets, which rose between the dark gigantic houses on either side, with a gentle acclivity from the spot where he then stood, he saw amongst the various groups which were moving rapidly along or across it, one which attracted his attention more particularly than the rest. It

was at that moment coming down the street, but proceeding in a somewhat slanting direction towards the corner of another small street, not fifty yards from the spot where he then was. There were two figures in it, in regard to which he could not be deceived: the one nearest him was the Abbé de Boisguerin, the second was his own brother, Gaspar de Montsoreau; and he could not help imagining that another whom he saw leading the way was that personage who had first called upon him on his arrival in Paris, named Nicolas Poulain.

Before he could recollect himself, an exclamation of surprise had called the attention of Brissac; but remembering how much his brother had excited the indignation of the Duke of Guise, and that his very life might be in danger if taken in the streets of Paris at that time, Charles of Montsoreau only answered in reply to Brissac's questions, that he had fancied he saw somebody whom he knew.

"There goes worthy Master Nicolas Poulain," said Brissac, "and the good Curé of St. Geneviéve, as zealous in our cause as any one; but

we can't stop to speak with them just now." And he was hurrying on, but Charles of Montsoreau stopped him, saying,

"For my part, Monsieur de Brissac, I shall return to the Hôtel de Guise. The Duke, I dare say, has concluded his interview with the Queen by this time, and I much wish to speak with him."

"Well, you cannot miss your way," cried Brissac. "Take that first turning to the left, and then the third to the right, and it will lead you straight to the Porte Cochére."

"Charles of Montsoreau nodded his head, and hurried on, with manifold anxieties and apprehensions in his bosom, which twenty times he pronounced to be absurd, but which, nevertheless, he could not banish by any effort of reason.

CHAP. II.

We must now return to mark what was passing at another point in the capital, an hour or two earlier than the events narrated in the end of the last chapter. The Duke of Guise sat in a cabinet in his hotel, with his sword laid upon the table before him, which also bore a pen, and ink, and paper, and some open letters. His foot was resting on a footstool, his dress plain but costly, and not one sign of any thing like preparation for the stirring events, which were to take place that day, apparent in either his looks, his apparel, or his demeanour.

Beside him booted, and in some degree armed, stood the Count of St. Paul; while Boisdauphin, who had just had his audience, was leaving the cabinet by a low door, and the Duke, bending his head, appeared listening

with the utmost tranquillity to what his friend was telling him.

"Then the matter is done," he said, as soon as St. Paul had concluded. "The Place Manbert is in the hands of the people, and may be made a Place d'Armes. Bois-dauphin tells me that the soldiers under Tinteville, at the Petit Pont, are barricaded on all sides and cannot move. You give me the same account of the Marché Neuf, the same is the case with the Gréve, the French guard under the Chatelet are hemmed in all round, the Cemetery of the Innocents is invested on all sides, and Malivaut, I understand, has been driven from his post in great disorder. This being done, St. Paul, you see these troops of the King's are not exactly in fortresses, but in prisons; and how Biron, or Crillon, or the King himself, could have committed the extraordinary error — all of them being men of experience — how they could have committed the extraordinary error, I say, of dividing their soldiery in the narrow streets and squares of such a city as Paris, sending them far from the

palace, and leaving them without communication with each other, I cannot conceive. However, they are all in our hands, and what we must think of is, to make a moderate use of our success. Try to keep the people from any active aggression, St. Paul; let them stand upon the defensive only, spread amongst them different parties of those whom we have collected, who may give them direction and assistance if needful. But keep the principal part of our own people in this neighbourhood, that we may direct them on any point where their presence may be necessary."

"Might it not be as well, your Highness," said the Count, "to take one measure more? We have far more people than enough to guard all the barricades. I can undertake to draw ten or even twelve thousand from different spots, and march them out of the Porte Neuve."

"To lead them where?" demanded the Duke of Guise, lifting his eyes to the countenance of St. Paul with a meaning expression.



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The Count of St. Pau

as it lay on the table before him, and seemed perfectly unconscious that the Count had not quitted the room. A slight smile curled that gentleman's lip, as he saw the direction that the Duke's eyes had taken, and he opened the door and passed out.

For several minutes the Duke of Guise continued to gaze in deep thought; and his bosom at that moment was certainly full of those sensations which never, perhaps, occur to any man but once in his lifetime—even if Fate have cast him one of those rare and memorable lots, which bear down the winner thereof, upon the stream of fame and memory, through a thousand ages after his own day is done. The fate of his country was in his hands; he had but to stretch out his arm and grasp the crown of France: and what temptations were there to do so to a mind like his!

It must not be forgotten that the Duke of Guise, by every hereditary feeling, by every prejudice of education, as well as by many strong and peculiar points in his own character, was in truth and reality a strenuous and zealous

supporter of the Roman Catholic Church. His veneration for that great and extraordinary institution had descended to him from his father, and had formed the great principle of action in his own life. Even had he merely assumed that devotion for the church during so many years, the very habit must have moulded his feelings into the same form; and he must have been by this time, more or less a zealous advocate of the Catholic cause, even if he had set out with caring nothing in reality about it. But such was not the case: his father had educated him in principles of strict and stern devotion to the faith in which they were born; and though in the gaieties and the frivolities of youth, or the eager struggles of manhood, he might have appeared in the ordinary affairs of life any thing on earth but the zealot, yet still his zeal would have been far more than a pretence, had it only been the effect of early education and constant habit.

There was something still more, however, to be said. The spirit of the Catholic Church was consonant to, and harmonious with, the whole tone of his own feelings, at

once deep, powerful, imaginative, enthusiastic, politic, and commanding. Chivalry, feudalism, and the Church of Rome, went hand in hand: all three were, indeed, in their decay; but if ever man belonged to the epoch of chivalry, it was Henry Duke of Guise; and he clung to all the other institutions that were attached to that past epoch, of which he in spirit was a part.

Attached therefore sincerely, deeply, and zealously to the Catholic Church — far, far more than his brother the Duke of Mayenne ever was or ever could be — Guise beheld a weak monarch, whom he despised and hated from the very bottom of his heart, wasting the whole energies of the Catholic party in France in a mere pretence of opposing the Huguenots, and, in fact, caring for nothing but so to balance the two religious factions as to be permitted to remain in luxurious indolence, swallowed up with the most foul, degrading, and abhorrent vices; setting an example of low and filthy effeminacy to his whole court; and only chequering a life of soft and unmanly voluptuousness by bursts of frantic debauchery, or moments of

apparent penitence and devotion, so wild and extravagant as to betray their own affectation, by the absurdities which they displayed.

The church to which Guise was attached was thus betrayed; his own especial friends and relations were neglected, insulted, or maltreated; all that were great or good in the nobility of France were shut out from the high offices of state, trampled upon by the minions of the King, and plundered by insolent and fraudulent financiers; the course of public justice was totally perverted; every thing in the government was venal and corrupt; the exertions of commerce and industry totally put to a stop; assassination, poison, and the knife, of daily occurrence; and bands of audacious plunderers tearing the unhappy land from north to south.

The Duke of Guise might well think, as he sat there gazing upon the hilt of that renowned sword which had never been drawn in vain, that, were he to say the few short words which were all that was necessary to bring the crown to his head and the sceptre to his hand — he might well think that he could obtain for

France thereby those great objects which he conceived were, beyond all others, necessary to her well-being. He might well conceive too that the cost of so doing would but be little: civil war already raged in the land; the whole south of France was one scene of contention; it already existed in the capital; and would, in all probability, be shortened rather than prolonged by his striking the one great and decisive blow.

The King, who was absolutely at his mercy, and whom he could cast down from his throne at a single word, was no obstacle in his way; the Epernons, the d'Aumonts, the Villequiers, he looked upon, notwithstanding all their favour, and the semblance of power which had been cast into their hands, as a mere herd of deer, to be driven backwards and forwards, like beasts of the chase, between himself and Henry of Navarre. And then again, when he looked to the great and chivalrous Huguenot monarch, what were the feelings with which he regarded the struggle that might take place between them? His breast heaved, his chest expanded,

his head was raised, his eye flashed with the thought of encountering an adversary worthy of the strife, a rival of powers equal or nearly equal to his own. When he thought of army to army, and lance to lance, against Henry of Navarre, with the crown of France between them as the golden prize of their mighty strife, his spirit seemed on fire within him, and he had well nigh forgotten all his resolutions, in order to do the daring act which might bring about that glorious result; and then, when fancy pictured him returning triumphant over his rival, with peace restored, and civil war put down, and commerce flourishing, and the rights of France maintained on every frontier, an uniform religion, a happy people, and the strong truncheon of command in a hand that could wield it lightly, the prospect was too bright, too beautiful, too tempting; and he pressed his hand tight upon his eyes, as if he could so shut it out from his mental vision.

What was it that deterred him? There was much reason on his side; there was little if any risk; there was the object of the church's safety; there was the gratification of vengeance upon those who had insulted and injured him; there

were the exhortations of the King of Spain; there was almost the universal voice of the people in the north of France; there was his own ambition; there was the certainty that all he did would be absolved, sanctioned, confirmed by the head of the Catholic Church; there was already in his favour the solemn and decided declaration of the highest theological authority in France; and there was many a specious argument, which no one could expect that he should sift and refute against himself.

What was it deterred him? Was it that there is a majesty which hedges in a King, sufficiently strong to overawe even the Duke of Guise himself? Was it that the habitual reverence, which he had been accustomed to show towards the kingly office, veiled or shielded from his eyes the real weakness of him who exercised it? Was it that he feared himself? — Or was it that he felt the act of usurpation must be confirmed by murder?

It cannot be told! Certain it is that he dreamt grand visions; that he saw mighty prospects of fair paths leading to honour, and glory, and high

renown, and his country's good, and his church's safety; and that he banished the visions and would not take the only step which would have over-passed every barrier to his forward way.

The words of Catherine de Medici rung in his ears — the words which had warned him against the growth of ambition in his own heart; he heard the shouts of the people without, and her warning voice again came back in tones that seemed well nigh prophetic. Almost, it would appear, without a cause, the vanity of all things seemed to press upon his mind at that moment with stronger effect than he had ever experienced before. There was a leaden weight upon his spirits he knew not why. He seemed to feel the hand of Fate, the tangible pressure of a directing arm, selecting for him the path he was to pursue, and forcing him thereon at the very moment when supreme command appeared given to him without a check.

The sun seemed to dazzle his eyes as he gazed from the window, vague figures passed before him, and crossed the dancing motes, picturing, like shadows, the persons of whom he had

been thinking. He saw Henry the Third distinctly before him, and fierce faces and bloody knives, and figures weltering in their blood upon the ground. He felt that he had indulged fancy too far, that he had given way to thought at the moment of action, that his course must be shaped as he had predetermined it in calmer hours; and waving his hand, as if to dispel the visions that still haunted his sight, he rose from his chair, leaning heavily on the table, pushed the sword away from him, and murmured to himself, "No, no! I will never be an usurper! Ho, without there!" he continued. "Who waits? What is that sound of musketry?"

"Erlan has just arrived, my Lord," replied the attendant, "to bear your Highness word, that the citizens have driven Malivaut down into the market, and that is the firing we hear."

"Tell Erlan to speed back as fast as possible," replied the Duke, "and bid them cease directly. Let them content themselves with hemming in the enemy without attacking them. But I hear more firing still; I shall be obliged to go forth myself."

"Monsieur de Brissac has just gone out on one side, your Highness," replied the attendant, "and Monsieur de St. Paul on the other; both with the purpose of stopping the bloodshed. But they have not had time to get to the spot yet."

"It has ceased now," said the Duke listening. "It has ceased now towards the Chatelet: but on the other side it is fierce. Go down and see what are those shouts, and let me know! Surely Henry," he added, "would not venture into such a scene as this. Alas, no! He would venture nothing — dare nothing, either for his own sake or his country's."

A moment after the attendant returned saying, "It is the Queen, my Lord; her Majesty Queen Catherine. The crowd of people prevents the chair from coming up to the gates; but she has descended and is coming on foot."

The Duke instantly started up and approached the head of the staircase for the purpose of hurrying down to receive his royal visitor; but Catherine was by this time upon the stairs, with Madame de Montpensier and a number of

other ladies, who had passed the morning at the Hôtel de Guise, surrounding her on all sides. The Duke advanced and gave her his hand to aid her in ascending the stairs; and perhaps the aspect of Catherine at that moment taught him more fully than any thing else, how tremendous was the scene without, and how completely the capital of France was at his disposal.

Habituated for more than twenty years to controul all her feelings, and to repress every appearance of fear or agitation, Catherine de Medici was nevertheless on the present occasion completely overcome. Her lip quivered, her head shook, and there was a degree of wild apprehension in her eyes, which it was some moments ere her strongest efforts could conquer.

"Cousin of Guise," she said, as soon as she had drawn her breath, "I must speak with you for a few moments alone; I must beseech you to give me audience, even if it be but for half an hour."

"Your Majesty has nothing to do but command," replied the Duke. "My time is at your disposal."

The Queen smiled slightly at feeling how easily the empty words of courts may be retorted upon those that use them. It has been said that it costs nothing to use civil language and say courtly things, even when insincere: but it costs much; for, sooner or later, we are sure to be paid in the same coin to which we have given currency, perhaps even more depreciating than when we sent it forth. She answered only by that smile however; and the Duke led her forward to his cabinet, all the rest of those who crowded the staircase remaining behind.

With every sign of ceremonious reverence the Duke of Guise led his royal guest to a seat, and stood before her; but she paused for a moment, and hesitated ere she spoke. "My Lord," she said at length, "this is a terrible state of things."

"Your Majesty knows more of it than I do," replied the Duke calmly, "for I have not gone forth from the house to-day; but I hear there is some tumult in Paris."

"Henry of Guise!" replied the Queen, fixing her eyes upon him. "Henry of Guise, be sincere!"

"Madam," replied the Duke, "one must adapt one's tone to circumstances. With those who are sincere with us we may be as candid as the day; but when we are sadly taught the fallacy of words, and the fragility of promises, we must, of course, shelter ourselves under some reserve."

"Your Highness's words imply an accusation," said Catherine somewhat sharply. "In what have I dealt insincerely with you?"

"Your Majesty promised me," replied the Duke of Guise, "that my noble friend, the young Count of Logères, should be set at liberty not later than yesterday morning; and that my ward, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, should be immediately replaced under my protection."

"You have done me wrong, your Highness," replied the Queen; "and attributed to want of will what only arose from want of power. Villequier has formally claimed the guardianship

of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut; his application is before the parliament at this hour; and orders have been given on all hands for the young Lady to remain under the protection of the King till the question is decided."

"I will cut his cause very short," replied the Duke of Guise frowning, "if she be not within my gates ere six hours be over."

"She is within your gates even now, my Lord," replied the Queen. "Your Highness is too quick. I sent an order myself for the liberation of the Count de Logères, for that only depended upon the King my son. Some one, however, diverted it from its right course, and he was only set free this morning. He ought to have been here before me, for I sent him on; but I suppose he has not been able to pass the mass of people round your doors. As to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, I have risked every thing to restore her to you; and notifying to Villequier and Epernon that I would no longer countenance her being detained, I liberated her on my own authority and brought her here in my own chair. She would have

been freed two nights ago, for I wished to effect the matter by a little stratagem, and have her carried from the convent and brought hither without any one knowing how or by whom it was done; but the meddling burgher guard came up and drove the people that I sent away. But let us, oh let us, my Lord, discuss more serious things. Have I now been sincere with you?"

"You have, madam," replied the Duke, "and I thank your Majesty even for doing an act of justice, so rare are they in these days. But may I know what are now your Majesty's commands?"

"You cannot affect to doubt, cousin," replied the Queen, "that Paris, the capital of my son's kingdom, is in revolt from end to end. Can you deny that you are the cause of it?"

"Though no man is bound to accuse himself, madam," replied the Duke, returning the Queen's searching glance with a calm, steady gaze, "yet I will answer your question, and sincerely. I have in no degree instigated this rising. His Majesty is the cause and not I

We see, without any reason or motion whatsoever, or any expression of the King's displeasure, large bodies of troops introduced into the city, during the night, without drums beating or colours flying, and altogether in a clandestine manner. We see them take possession of various strong points, and we hear them using menacing language — Monsieur de Crillon himself passing through the streets, breathing nothing but menaces and violence; and if your Majesty can wonder that in these circumstances the citizens of Paris fly to arms for the defence of their property, of their lives, and of the honour of their women, it is more than I can do. In truth, I know not what the King expected to produce, but the very result which is before us. I assure your Majesty, however, that it is not at my instigation that this was done; though, even if I had done this, and far more, I should have held myself completely justified."

"Justified," said the Queen, shaking her head mournfully. "What then becomes of all your Highness said upon ambition but three days ago?"

"Ambition, madam, would have nothing to do with it," replied the Duke. "It would have been merely self-defence. Who had so much cause to fear that the rash and despotic proceedings which have taken place were aimed at him as I have had? Who had so much cause to know that the object of all this military parade, was not the hanging of some half dozen miserable burghers in the Place de Grève, but the arrest, and perhaps massacre, of Henry of Guise and all his kind and zealous friends? Can you deny, madam, that such was the cause for which these soldiers were brought hither? Can you deny, madam, that only yesterday, when the King assuming friendship towards me, invited me to ride forth with him — can you deny that it was debated in his council, whether he should or should not order his guards to murder me as we went? Confident in my own conscience, madam, and believing that the King, though misinformed, entertained no personal ill-will against one who had served him well, I came to Paris, walked through the royal guards, and presented myself at Court,

in the midst of my enemies, with only eight attendants; and ever since that day, there has not been an hour in which my life and liberty have not been in danger, in which schemes for my destruction have not been agitated in the Cabinet of the King; and I say that, under these circumstances, I should have been perfectly justified in raising the people for my own defence. But, madam, I did not do so; and I am not the cause of this rising.—What is it, Monsieur de Bois-dauphin?" he added, turning to a gentleman who had just entered, and who now answered a few words in a low tone. The Duke retired with him into the window, and after speaking for a moment or two in whispers, Guise dismissed him and returned, making apologies to the Queen for the interruption.

It may be said, without noticing it again, that the same sort of occurrence took place more than once — different officers and attendants coming in, from time to time, speaking for a moment with the Duke in private, and hurrying out again. Though Catherine de Medici felt this to be somewhat unceremonious

treatment, and though it evidently showed her, that whatever share the Duke had had in raising the tumult at first, he assuredly now guided all its proceedings, and ruled the excited multitudes from his own cabinet; yet, in other respects, she was not sorry for time to pause and think ere she replied, knowing that she had to deal with one whose mind was far too acute to be satisfied with vague or unsatisfactory answers.

"My Lord," she said, as soon as the conversation was resumed, "I did not mean exactly to say that you are the active cause of these proceedings, or that you have excited the people. What I meant was, that your presence in Paris is the occasion of this emotion. You cannot doubt that it is so; and therefore, being in this respect the cause, it is only yourself who can provide the remedy."

"Pardon me, madam," replied the Duke of Guise; "I do not see how that can be. In the first place, I have all along denied that I am the cause, either inert or active. The people have risen for their own defence, though, certainly, my defence and my welfare is wrapped

up in that of the people. In the next place, I know not what remedy can be provided in the present state of affairs. What have you to propose, madam?"

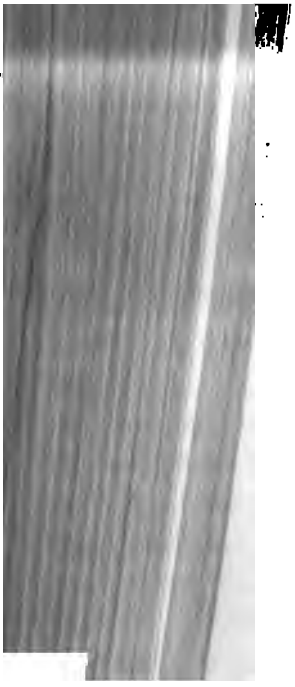
"What I came to propose, my fair cousin," replied the Queen, "and what, I am sure, is the only way of quieting the tumult that now exists, is, that you should quit Paris immediately.—Nay! nay! hear me out. If I propose this thing to you, it is not without being prepared and ready to offer you such inducements and recompences, both for yourself and all your friends, as may show you how highly the King, my son, esteems you, and at what a price he regards the service you will render him. Look at this paper, good cousin of Guise, signed with his own name, and see what perfect security and contentment it ought to give you."

The Duke of Guise, however, put the paper gently and respectfully from him, replying, "Madam, what you propose is impossible. Either the people of Paris have risen in their own defence, in which case my leaving the city would have no effect upon the tumult,

or else they have risen in mine, when it would be base to abandon them. I believe the first of these cases is the true one, and that, therefore, by staying in Paris, I may serve the King far more effectually than I could by quitting the city."

Catherine de Medici had nothing directly to reply to the reasoning of the Duke; but she answered somewhat warmly, "By my faith, your Highness, I think some day you will logically prove that the best way to serve the King is to take the crown off his head."

"Madam," replied the Duke drily, "Messieurs d'Epernon, Villequier, Joyeuse, D'O., and others, have long been trying to prove the proposition which your Majesty puts forth; but they have not yet convinced me of the fact, — nor ever will. They, madam, are or have been those who have put the King's crown in danger; and, as far as regards myself, I have but to remind you that if I had any designs upon the King's person, five hundred men sent out this morning by the Porte de Nesle, and five hundred more by the Porte



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other condition which will induce you to quit Paris even for a few days?"

"It were useless for me to read it, madam," replied the Duke. "Nothing on earth that could be offered me would induce me to quit Paris at this moment. But believe me, madam, my being here has nothing to do with the continuance of the tumult. I have sent out all my friends and officers and relations already to calm the disturbance. But it is the King who is the cause of it, or, rather, the King's evil advisers. As he has occasioned it, he must put a stop to it."

"What would you have him do?" demanded Catherine de Medici quickly. "How would you have him act?"

"In the first place," replied the Duke, "let him recall his troops; let them be withdrawn from every post they occupy! Their presence was the cause of the people's rising, and as soon as they are gone, the emotion will gradually subside."

"He has sent the order of recall already," replied Catherine; "but it is impossible to execute it. Hemmed in by barricades

on every side, how can they retire, or take one step without danger?"

"That I trust," replied the Duke "can soon ——"

But he was interrupted in the midst of what he was saying by the sudden entrance of Charles of Montsoreau.

"I beg your Highness to pardon me," he said. "Your Majesty will, I am sure, forgive me, when I ask if you know what has become of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut?"

There was anxiety and apprehension in every line of Charles of Montsoreau's countenance, and the Queen's brow instantly gathered together with a look of mingled surprise and apprehension.

"She followed me into the hotel; did she not?" exclaimed the Queen. "I got out of the chair first, and she came immediately after. Surely I saw her upon the stairs!"

"The porter, madam, declares, that there was no lady entered with your Majesty; that two or three gentlemen came in; and that it was some time before your chair, and the rest of your male

attendants could come up, on account of the crowd. I have ventured to ask Madame de Montpensier and the rest of the ladies in the house, before I intruded here: but no one has seen Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and she is certainly not in the house."

"Is this the way I am treated?" exclaimed the Duke of Guise, his brow gathering into a tremendous frown. "Is this the way that I am sported with at the very moment ——"

"Nay! nay! nay! Cousin of Guise," exclaimed Catherine de Medici, rising from her seat and clasping her hands. "So help me, Heaven, as I have had no share in this! I descended from my chair in the midst of the crowd—knowing terror and agitation, such as, indeed, I never knew before—and I thought that this poor girl had followed. I was too much engrossed with the thought of my son's throne tottering to its foundation to pay much attention to any thing else; but Monsieur de Logères himself can tell you, that I treated her with all kindness, and that mine was the order for her liberation."

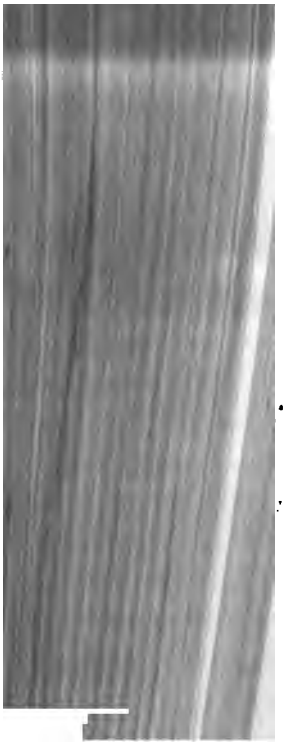
"Indeed it was, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "Her Majesty displayed every sort of kindness, and Mademoiselle de Clairvaut was in the same chair with her when I left her, scarce a hundred yards from these gates. I fear, my Lord, however, that there are machinations taking place, which I must explain to you. And in a low voice he told the Duke what he had seen while returning from the Marché Neuf.

"This Nicolas Poulain is a villain," exclaimed the Duke after he had listened. "I have received the proofs thereof this very morning. Ho! without there! — Madam, by your leave," he continued, turning to the Queen, "I would fain speak with these attendants of yours, but dare not presume to command them hither in your presence."

The Queen immediately directed all those who had followed her chair, or had borne it, to be called in, and the Duke questioned them sharply, in a stern and lofty tone, regarding what they had seen of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut after the Queen had passed on.

The answer of each was the same however, namely, that none of them had seen any thing of her. Some had accompanied the Queen and kept the way clear, and two others who, had remained with the chair, as well as the bearers themselves, declared that the young Lady, after having descended from the Queen's chair had gone on; that there was an immediate rush of the people, which separated them from the rest of the royal train; and that what between the pressure and confusion that immediately took place, and the kicking of one of the chargers, which made the people run back with cries and affright, they had seen nothing more of the party to which they had belonged, till they had made their way up to the Hôtel de Guise and obtained admission.

The Duke paused with a gloomy and anxious brow. "Go, some one," he said at length, "go up to Philibert of Nancy, who was placed above, to watch what was taking place from the top of the house. Ask him what he saw after the Queen's arrival, and bring me down word."



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gloomily by the Queen, who, on her part looked up at his dark and frowning countenance with a degree of calmness which did not seem quite so natural as she could have wished.

"Whatever has happened, my Lord Duke," she said, after listening to the young nobleman's report, "whatever has happened, on my honour, on my salvation, I have had no share in it; and I promise you most solemnly, not to rest a moment till I have discovered what has become of your ward, and have made you acquainted therewith. If she be in the Court of my son, I make bold to say, that she shall be instantly restored to you: but I cannot believe that it is so, as it is impossible for Villequier to have passed those barriers without being torn to pieces by the people."

Still the Duke remained thinking gloomily without making any answer. "Logères," he said at length, "I must trust you with this business, for I have more matters to deal with than I can well compass. From what you said just now, and from what the boy Ignati told me, I know how you stand with our poor Marie.

You know what I said, and what I promised long ago. Seek her, find her, and wed her! Monsieur de St. Paul will tell you where your own men are; take her, wherever you find her: by force, if it be necessary; and if any man, calling himself a gentleman, oppose you, cleave him to the jaws. I will bear you out in whatever you do: there is my signet: but stay; you had better see Marteau Chapelle and Bussi about it. They know every house in Paris, and I can spare them now from other affairs: bid them go with you and aid you; and tell Chapelle——What is it now, Brissac? You look confounded and alarmed."

"The news I have will confound your Highness also, I am sure," replied Brissac; "to alarm you is not possible, I fancy. I have just received intelligence from the Porte de Nesle, my Lord, that the King has quitted Paris, and taken the road to Chartres!"

The Duke of Guise turned towards Catherine de Medici, and gazed upon her sternly, saying, "You have done this, madam! You amuse me, while you destroy me!" *

* I have given the Duke's own words without variation.

"I *have* done this, cousin of Guise," replied the Queen, "and I have done wisely for all parties. I have removed from you a great temptation to do an evil action — a temptation which I saw that you yourself feared; and while I have removed that danger from you, my advice has put my son in safety."

"Madam," replied the Duke, "I felt no temptation: my resolution was firm, positive, and unshaken; and had I chosen to compromise the King's safety, or do wrong to his legitimate authority, the Louvre would have been invested six hours ago, for the people were already on their march, if I had not stopped them. I wonder that he escaped in safety, however, for they are very much infuriated at the sight of these soldiers."

"He walked from the Louvre," replied Brissac, "on foot to the Tuilleries, I hear, followed by some half dozen gentlemen; he then mounted his horses in the stables, and rode out suddenly; but it is said that they fired at him from the Porte de Nesle. The people, however, as they hear it, are becoming quite furious, and



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remembering, that as you warned me not long ago, popularity is the most transient of all things, and that mine may not last long enough to save the state a second time from the dangers that menace it."

"I understand you, cousin of Guise; I understand you;" replied the Queen. "It may not last long enough, or it may not be willingly exerted: but I give you my promise, that every thing shall be done to content you; and with that view I have already demanded that the insolent, greedy, and ambitious Epernon shall be banished from the Court, and stripped of his plundered authority.—But hark!" she continued, "I hear the firing recommence. Wait not for further words, or for any ceremonies; I will find my way back to the Louvre without difficulty. Go, my Lord, go at once, and save the poor Swiss from the fury of the people!"

The Duke bowed low, took up his hat and sword, and without other arms walked out into the streets.

CHAP. III.

PASSING out by the rooms belonging to the porter, instead of by the Porte Cochère, the Duke of Guise, followed by a number of his officers, presented himself to the people on the steps which we have already noticed. The moment he appeared, the whole street rang with acclamations, a path was instantly opened for him through the midst of the people, and mounting his horse he rode on, the barricades opening before him, as if by magic, wherever he came, and the people rending the air with acclamations of his name.

From time to time he stopped as he went, either bending down his proud head to speak to some of those whom he knew, or addressing the general populace in the neighbourhood of the different barriers, exhorting them to tranquillity, and beseeching, commanding,

and entreating them to desist from all attacks upon the soldiery. His words spread like lightning from mouth to mouth; and though he went in person to several of the different points where the unequal contest was actively going on, the assault upon the troops was stopped in other quarters also, by the mere report of his wishes.

Thus, as it were in triumph, totally unarmed amidst the armed multitude, he went ruling their furious passions, as if by some all-powerful charm. The most violent, the most exasperated, the most sullen, uttered not one word in opposition to his will, and showed nothing but promptness and zeal in executing his commands. Before he reached the Place de Grève even, towards which his course was directed, the screams, the cries, the shouts, the firing, had ceased in every part of Paris, and nothing was heard throughout that wide capital but the rending shouts of joy, with which the multitude accompanied him on his way.

On entering the Place de Grève the Duke looked sternly up at the windows of the Hôtel

de Ville, but did not enter the building. He said, however, speaking to those immediately surrounding him, "A week shall not have elapsed before we have cleared that house of the vermin that infest it; and the people shall be freed from those who have betrayed them."

Then dismounting from his horse, and ascending the steps leading to the elevated space, called the Perron of the Hôtel de Ville, he lifted his hat from his head for a moment, as a sign that he wished to address the people. All was silent in an instant; and then were heard the full rich deep tones of that eloquent voice, pouring over the heads of the multitude, and reaching the very farthest parts of the square.

"My friends and fellow-citizens," he said. "You have this day acquired a great and glorious victory. You have triumphed over the efforts of despotic power, exerted, I am sure, not by the King's own will and consent, but by the evil counsels, and altogether by the evil efforts, of minions, peculators, and

traitors. The real merit of those who win great victories and achieve great deeds, is ascertained more by the way in which they use their advantages, than by the way in which those advantages have been gained. Were you a mean, degraded, unthinking race of men, who had been stirred up by oppression into objectless revolt, you would now content yourselves with wreaking your vengeance on a few pitiable and unhappy soldiers, who in obedience to the commands which they have received, have been cast into the midst of you, like criminals of old, given up naked to a hungry lion. But you are not such people; you have great objects before you; you know and appreciate the mighty purposes for which you have fought and conquered; and though driven by self-defence to resist the will of the King, you are still men to venerate and respect the royal authority; and even while you determine, for his sake as well as for your own, never to rest satisfied till the Catholic Church is established beyond the power of heretics to shake; till the Court is freed from the minions and evil

counsellors that infect it; till the finances of the state are collected, and administered by a just and a frugal hand; and till the whole honours, rewards, and emoluments of the country are no longer piled upon one man — though you are determined to seek for and obtain all this, nevertheless, I know, you are not men to trench in the least upon the royal authority, farther than your own security requires, or to injure the royal troops whom you have conquered, when they are no longer in a situation to do you wrong. You will remember, I am sure, that they are our fellow-christians and our fellow-men, and you will treat them accordingly. I have therefore," he said, "requested my friends and fellow-labourers in your cause, Monsieur de Brissac and Monsieur de St. Paul, to conduct hither in safety the French and Swiss troops from the different quarters in which they have been dispersed. Their arms will be brought hither by our own friends, and in the manner which we shall deal with these two bodies of soldiery,

I trust that we shall meet still with the approbation of our brethren."

While thus speaking, the Duke of Guise had been interrupted more than once by the applauses of the people, and in the end loud and reiterated acclamations left no doubt that all he chose to do would receive full support from those who heard him.

While he was yet speaking — according to the orders which he had given as he came along — the arms of the Swiss and French guards were brought in large quantities, by different bodies of the citizens: some carrying them in hand-barrows, some bearing them upon their shoulders; and it was a curious sight to see men and boys, and even women, loaded with morions, and pikes, and swords, and arquebuses, bringing them forward through the crowd, and piling them up before the princely man who stood at the top of the steps, surrounded by many of the noblest and most distinguished gentlemen in France.

This sight occupied the people for some minutes, and then a cry ran through the square

of "The Swiss! the Swiss!" The announcement caused some agitation amongst the populace, and some forgetting that the soldiery were disarmed, unslung their carbines, or half drew their swords, as if to resist a new attack. The discomfited soldiers, however, came on in a long line, two abreast, now totally disarmed, and seeming by their countenances yet uncertain of the fate that awaited them. With some difficulty a space was made for them in the Place de Grève, and being drawn up in two lines, the Duke commanded them to take their arms, but not their ammunition. Two by two they advanced to the pile; and each man, as far as possible, selected his own, when it appeared, to use the words of the Duke of Guise himself, when recounting the events of that day to Bassompiere, that there never had been such complete obedience amongst so agitated a multitude; for not one sword, morion, pike, or arquebuse, of all the Swiss and French there present, was found to be wanting.*

When all was complete, the Duke of Guise

* This extraordinary fact reminds us of days not long passed.

turned to the soldiery, saying in a loud and somewhat stern tone, "The people of Paris considering that you have acted under the commands of those you have sworn to obey, permit you for this once to retire in safety from the perilous situation in which you have been placed; but as there are points which make a considerable difference between the Swiss troops in the pay of France and the French troops themselves, there must be a difference also in their treatment. The Swiss, as foreigners, could have no motive or excuse for refusing to obey the commands imposed upon them; the French had to remember their duty to their country and to their religion. The Swiss, therefore, we permit to march out with colours flying and arms raised; the French will follow them, with their arms reversed and their colours furled."

A loud shout from the people answered this announcement; for throughout the course of that eventful day, the Swiss had acted with moderation and discipline, whereas the licentious French soldiery had during the early morning, while they thought themselves in possession of

the capital, displayed all the brutal insolence of triumphant soldiery.

The Duke of Guise spoke a few words to Brissac and to St. Paul, and those two officers put themselves at the head, Brissac of the Swiss, and St. Paul of the French guards. Each held a small cane in his hand, and with no other arms they led the two bands from barrier to barrier through the city, till they were safe within the precincts of the Louvre.

Scarcely had these two parties quitted the Place de Grève, however, drawing a number of people from that spot, when information was brought to the Duke, that there were still two bands of soldiers in the city, one in the Cemetery of the Innocents, and one under the Chatelet, but both threatened by the people with instant destruction.

"We must make our way thither quickly," said the Duke; "for, if I remember right, it is the band of Du Gas which is at the Chatelet, and the people are furious against him."

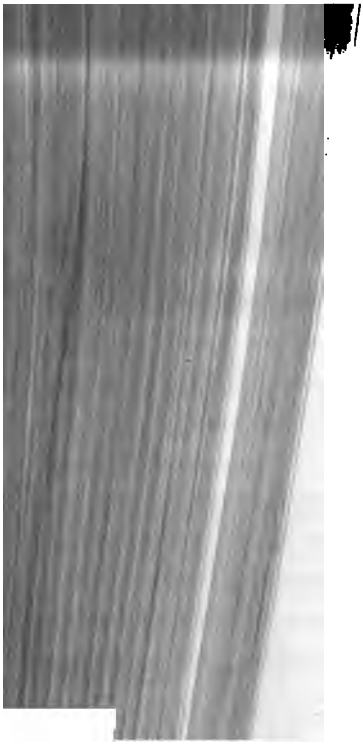
He accordingly lost not a moment on the way; but turning to Bois-dauphin, who accompanied

him, he said in a low tone, as they went, "I would have given my left hand to stay and examine the interior of the Hôtel de Ville, in order to punish some of the traitors who, I know, are lurking there. Perhaps it is better, however, to let them escape than that any mischief should be done; and in these popular movements, if we once begin to shed blood, there is no knowing where it will end."

"I fear there is bloodshed going on at present," said Bois-dauphin, hearing a shot or two fired at no great distance. "They are at it under the Chatelet now."

"Hurry on! hurry on!" said the Duke, speaking to some of those behind. "Run on fast before, and announce that I am coming. Command them, in my name, to stop."

Two or three of his followers ran forward, and no more shots were heard; but scarcely two minutes after, just as the Duke had passed one of the barricades, he saw two or three men hurrying up to him, led by Chapelle Marteau, who approached him with no slight expression of grief and apprehension in his countenance.



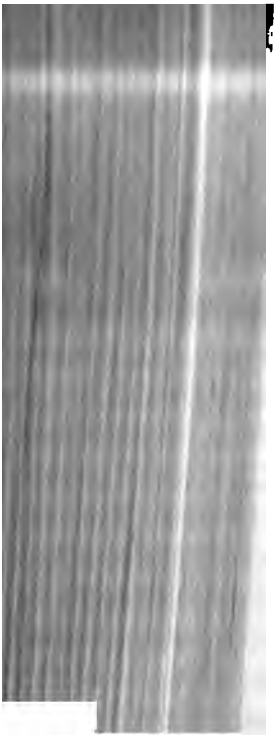
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The Duke of Guise paused, and gazed sadly down upon the ground, repeating the words, "Poor youth! poor youth! so are his bright hopes cut short! He shall be avenged at least! Show me the house, Chapelle."

And he followed rapidly upon the steps of the Leaguer, who led him to a small house, with the entrance, which was through a Gothic arch, sunk somewhat back from the other houses. There were two windows above the arch, and a window which flanked it on either side; but the followers of the young Count of Logères and of Chapelle Marteau had by this time broken open the doors, and rushed into the building.

"This is part of the old priory of the Augustins," said the Duke of Guise as they came up. "They exchanged it some fifty years ago for their house further down. But there are two or three back ways out, I know; and if you have not put a guard there, they have escaped you."

"It proved as the Duke anticipated. The house was found completely vacant, and though



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sigh, "Alas, Monsieur de Biron! those who stirred up this fire should have been able to extinguish it."

"I say so, too, my Lord," replied Biron sadly. "Evil be to those who gave the counsel that has been followed God knows I opposed it to the utmost of my power, and only obeyed the King's absolute commands in bringing these poor fellows hither, who, I fear, will never be suffered to pass out as they came."

"For the soldiery I have no fear," replied the Duke, "and as for you, gentlemen, I must do the best that I can. But the people look upon you as partially authors of the evil, and they will not be easily satisfied."

The Duke of Guise, however, succeeded, though not without difficulty, in his purpose of saving all. The people yielded to him, but for the first time showed some degree of resistance; and he returned to the Hôtel de Guise feeling more sensibly, from that little incident, the truth of the warning which Catherine de Medici had given him, regarding the instability

of popularity, than from all the arguments or examples that reason or history could produce.

We may easily imagine the reception of the Duke in his own dwelling: the joy, the congratulations, the inquiries; and we may imagine, also, the passing of that busy night, while messengers were coming to and fro at every instant, and couriers were dispatched from the Hôtel de Guise to almost every part of France.

Henry of Guise was well aware, that whatever deference and humility he might assume in his words towards the King, or whatever testimonies of forgiveness and affection Henry might offer to him, his own safety now, for the rest of his life, depended on his power, and that his armour must be the apprehensions of the King, rather than his regard.

Up to a very late hour, notwithstanding all the fatigues and agitations of the day, he sat with his secretary Pericard, writing letters to all his different friends in various parts of the country, demanding their immediate assistance and support, even while he expressed the most devoted attachment to the King; and thus, in

the letter we have already cited to Bassompière, he makes use of such expressions as the following: —

"Thus it is necessary that you should make a journey here to see your friends, whom you will not find, thank God! either wanting in means or resolution. We must have good intelligence from Germany, however, that we be not taken by surprise. We are not without forces, courage, friends, nor means; but still less without honour, or respect and fidelity to the King, which we will preserve inviolably, doing our duty, as people of worth, of honour, and as good Catholics."

It was about twelve o'clock at night, when Reignaut, the surgeon, entered the cabinet of the Duke, and bowing low said, "I come, according to your Highness's order, to tell you the state of the young Count of Logères. Soon after I saw you about six to-day, we extracted both balls. He bore the operation well, and has slept since for several hours."

"Is he sleeping still?" demanded the Duke.

"No," replied the surgeon. "He awoke

about a quarter of an hour ago, and seems anxious to see your Highness. He questioned me closely as to his state, when I told him the truth."

"You did right, you did right," replied the Duke. "He is one that can bear it. What is your real opinion, Reignaut, in regard to the result?"

"I can hardly tell your Highness," replied the surgeon. "Two or three days more are necessary, before we can judge. The wound in the shoulder is not dangerous, though the most painful. The shot which passed through his body, and lodged in the back, is one which we generally consider mortal; but then, in ordinary cases, death either takes place almost immediately, or indications of such a result are seen in an hour or two, as to leave no further doubt on the subject. No such indications have appeared here, and it may have happened that the ball has passed through without touching any vital part. We must remember, also," he continued, "that the wound was received when the moon was in her first

quarter, which is, of course, very favourable; and we shall also, if there be any chance of life being saved, have made some progress towards recovery before any crisis is brought on by the moon reaching the full."

The Duke listened attentively, for though such things may appear to us, in the present day, mere foolishness, that was not the case two centuries and a half ago, and the power of the moon, in affecting the wounded or sick, was never questioned. "Stay, Reignaut," said the Duke, "I will go with you, and see this good youth. I love him much; there is a frankness in his nature that wins upon the heart. Besides, he has saved my life, and has come to my aid on all occasions, as if there were a fate in it; and I believe, moreover, that he loves me personally as much — nay, perhaps more, than any of my own family and relations."

Thus saying the Duke rose, and, followed by Reignaut, passed through the door of his cabinet into the anteroom. His pages instantly presented themselves to light him on his way, and traversing some of the long cor-

ridors of the vast building he inhabited, he reached the chamber where his unhappy friend lay stretched upon the bed of pain and sickness. The boy Ignati sat beside him, tending him with care and affection; and at the foot of the bed, with his arms crossed upon his chest, stood his faithful servant Gondrin, with tears in his eyes.

The Duke seated himself by the young Count, and remained with him for nearly an hour; and knowing well what effect the mind has upon the body, spoke to him cheerfully and hopefully of the time to come, talked of his recovered health as a thing certain, and mentioned his union with Marie de Clairvaut as beyond all doubt.

"It is upon that subject, my Lord," said the young gentleman, "that I wished particularly to speak with your Highness. I have not had either time or opportunity of telling you all that has occurred since I left you at Soissons. But from all I have heard, I now judge better in regard to the situation of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut than even you can. Nay, Monsieur

Reignaut, I must speak a few words, but I will be as brief and as prudent as possible. In this business, my Lord, suspect not the Queen. It is not in her hands that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut will be found. Neither is she with Villequier, depend upon it; nor in the power of the King. I grieve to say it, but I feel sure my own brother has something to do with the events of this day as far as they affect her so dear to me."

"But you surely do not think," exclaimed the Duke, "that it is your brother's hand which inflicted these wounds upon you!"

"The ball would be poisoned, indeed, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "if I did believe such to be the case. But I trust it is not so; most sincerely do I trust — ay, and believe — it is not so. There is another hand, my Lord Duke; and not long ago I could as well have believed that my own father's would have been raised against me as the one of which I speak. But still there is another hand, my Lord, which — actuated by motives dark and evil — I believe to have been raised against my life. That hand is in general unerring in its aim;

and the moment before the shot was fired, I saw the calm cold features which I know so well, at the window just above me."

"But whose is the hand?" exclaimed the Duke. "Whose are the features that you mean?"

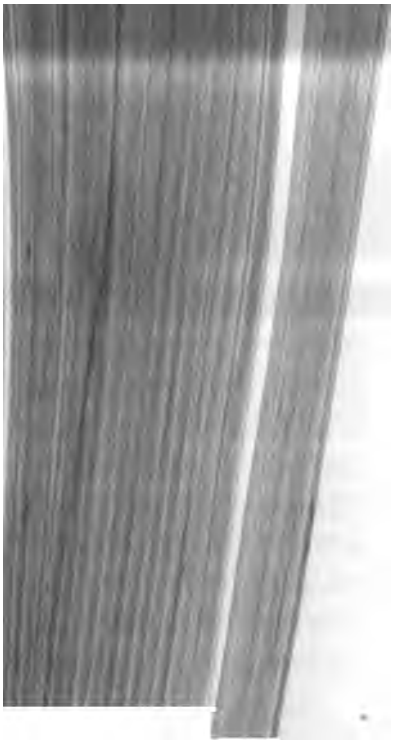
"I mean those of the Abbé de Boisguerin, my Lord," replied the Count; "and to him, to him, I think, your Highness must look even rather than to my brother. I believe Gaspar but to be a tool in his hands, and that he uses him for his own dark and criminal designs."

"Have I not heard you say he was your tutor?" demanded the Duke. "What then are his motives? what can be his inducements?"

"Love, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "I have the word of that sweet girl for his having dared to use words towards her, for which he deserves and must meet with punishment. Him I would point out to your Highness as the person to be watched, and sought for, and made to account for all his actions; for, depend upon it, his are the machinations which are ruling these events."

"He shall not be forgotten!" replied the Duke. "He shall not be forgotten! But now, Logères, speak no more, except indeed only to answer me one question. I have heard that the county of Morly has lately fallen to you by the death of the old Count. These, with the estates of Logères, if properly conducted, may afford me great assistance. You are incapable for the time of directing them at all. Do you authorise me to fill your post, and give orders in your name till you are better?"

"Most willingly, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "I had already thought of it. But your Highness talks of my becoming better: I have thought of that matter too, but in a different light; and considering what may take place in case of my own death, I have requested Monsieur Reignaut here to cause a will to be drawn up, leaving the whole that I possess to the person whom I love best on earth, with your Highness for her guardian. There are a few gifts bestowed on those that love me, and a provision for all old servants: but ——"



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CHAP. IV.

We must now pass over a considerable lapse of time without taking any note of the political intrigues with which it was occupied, and lead the reader at once from the month of May to the end of summer, and from the city of Paris to the distant town of Augoulème.

Under the high hill on which that city stands, at the distance of about a league from the base, was in those days a beautiful park with a pavilion of four towers; and in one of these towers, on a fine summer day towards the end of July, sat the young Marquis of Montsoreau together with the Abbé de Boisguerin: not exactly in conversation, for the Marquis had not spoken a word for nearly an hour; but in dull companionship.

The young nobleman's back was turned towards the light, his eyes were bent down upon the ground, his head drooped forward in a despond-

ing attitude, the nostril was painfully expanded, as if he drew his breath with difficulty, and the teeth were tight shut, as it were to keep down some struggling emotions that swelled for utterance. An open letter lay upon the table, and another much more closely written, and written in cypher, was in the hand of the Abbé de Boisguerin. The Abbé's brow too was a good deal contracted, and his lip was somewhat pale, though it quivered not; but from time to time he addressed the young nobleman with words of consolation, regarding some afflicting tidings just received.

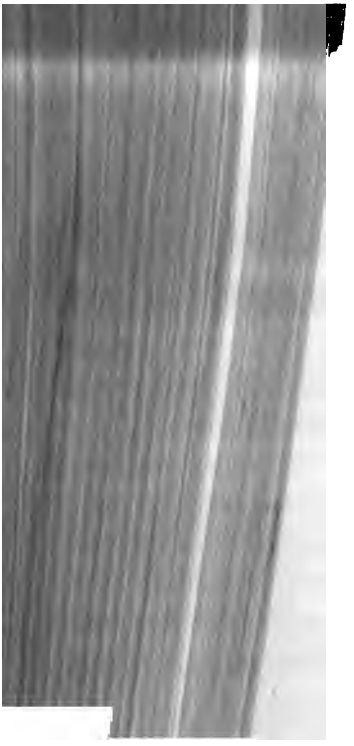
Those words, however, though well chosen, appropriate and elegant, were not of the words that console, for they were not of the heart. He reasoned logically on the inutility of human grief, and still more on the vanity of regretting that which could not be recalled. He spoke lightly of all deep feelings for any earthly thing, and he talked of every deed upon the face of the earth being justified by the importance of the objects to be obtained.

When he had talked thus for some time

without obtaining any answer, he was going on to justify the past; but Gaspar de Montsoreau suddenly started up, and interrupted him with a vehemence which he had never displayed before.

"Abbé de Boisguerin," he said, "talk not to me of consolation and of comfort. Is not my brother dead? Is not my brother dead, killed by my own hand? Can you tear that from the book of fate? Can you blot it out from memory? Can you rase it for ever from the records of crimes done? Can you find me a pillow on all the earth, where I can lay my head in peace?"

"Your brother, indeed, is dead," said the Abbé de Boisguerin, without in the least degree trying to relieve the mind of his young companion from the crime with which conscience charged him. "Your brother, indeed, is dead; and it is not to be denied that your hand, my dear Gaspar, took his life; but yet you were in a city where war was actually going on between two parties, one of which you served, and the other your brother. These things have happened every day in civil wars, and always will



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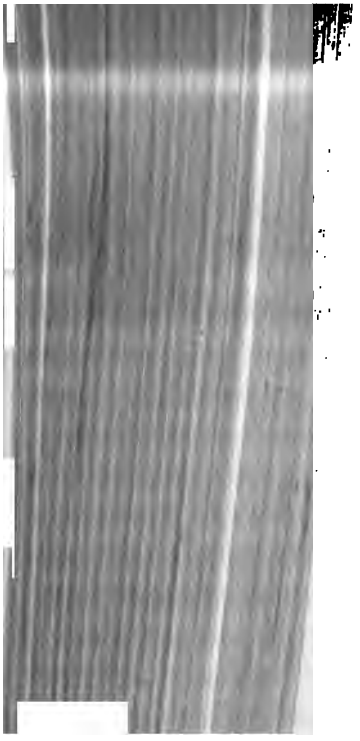
me throughout?" demanded the Marquis. "Was it not you who devised the scheme, prepared the means, got possession of the Queen's letter by corrupting her servants. Was it not your tool, that, upon pretence of assisting her to the other gates of the hotel, got her into our power; and was it not you, when her prayers and entreaties and agitation would have made me yield — was it not you that resisted, and remorselessly bade the men carry her on? Did you not yourself stand by me when the shot was fired; and was it not your warning, that disgrace and death must follow hesitation, which winged the ball that took my brother's life?"

"It is all true, Gaspar," replied the Abbé de Boisguerin in a sad but no longer a harsh tone. "It is all true; and from you I meet the reward, which all men will meet and well deserve who love others better than themselves, and who do for them things that they would not do for themselves. Nevertheless, I still think that there was not that evil on our side with which you seem to reproach yourself. Shocked and mourning for your brother's death, you see all

things in dark and gloomy colours. Those things which you regarded before as light, have now become to you heavy and sombre as night. But all this is but mood, and let me call to your remembrance what sense and reason say. You and your brother loved the same person,—you vehemently, warmly, devotedly; he coldly, and by halves. You, as the elder brother and as lord of the dwelling in which she was received, had, if any thing, the first claim upon her; and he himself rendered that claim still greater by leaving her entirely to you, and absenting himself from her. You had every right, therefore, to seek her hand by all means; and when you found that, though he affected generous forbearance, he had gone covertly to forestall your demand, and gain the promise of her hand from her guardian, surely you were bound to keep no measures with him. All I did subsequently was to serve you in a cause that I thought was right, and it is but a few days ago that you were grateful to me for so doing. I said at the time, and I say again, that if at the moment when your brother commenced his attack upon the

house in the Rue de la Ferronière, either you or I had been taken, death and eternal disgrace would have been the consequence. We acted but in our own defence, and those who assailed us cannot accuse us for so acting."

Gaspar de Montsoreau heard him in sullen silence, his dark eyes rolling from side to side beneath his heavy eyebrows. In his dealings with the Abbé de Boisguerin he had by this time learned fully how artful and politic was the man who led him. He saw it, and he could not doubt it, even while he shared in the things at which his better spirit revolted. But that very knowledge taught him to doubt, whether the art and the policy were used for his service, and out of affection to him, or whether they were all directed in some secret way to the benefit of him who wielded them so dexterously. The suspicions which Villequier had instilled rose fresh in his mind at this very time; and as his only answer to the Abbé's reasonings, he demanded with a keen glance and a sharp tone, "Tell me, Abbé, was it, or was it not, you who

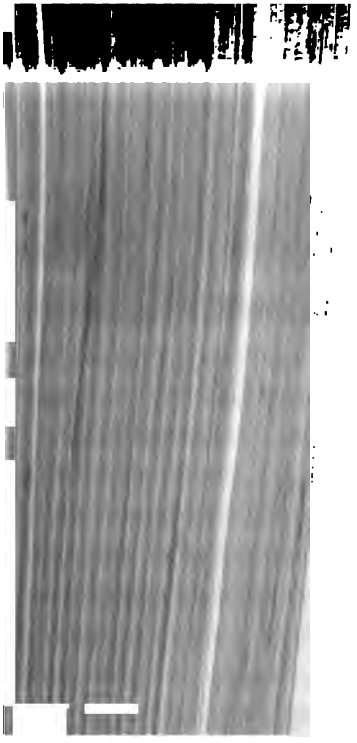


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green vines, with the birds still singing sweetly in the woods without. But it was all to him as the face of Eden to our first parents after the fall; a shade seemed to come over his eyes when he looked upon the loveliness of nature; the very sunshine seemed to him darkness; and the fair world a desert.

"Can you give me back my delight in that sunshine?" he said, after a pause. "Can you make the notes of those birds again sound sweet to my ear? Can you remove the heavy, heavy burden of remorse from this heart? Can you ever, ever prove to me, that for this unrequited love I have not made myself a guilty wretch, bearing the sign of Cain upon his brow, the curse of Cain within his bosom?"

"If such be your feelings," replied the Abbé, "if such — contrary to all justice and reason — is the state in which your mind is to remain, there is one way that will alleviate and soothe you, that may seem in your eyes some atonement, and put your conscience more at rest. Cast off this love which you believe has led you into evil, yield the pursuit of this



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my feet. Have I not broken the nearest and the dearest ties of kindred and affection, murdered the brother that hung on the same breast, dimmed the eyes that looked upon me in infancy, frozen the warm heart that was cradled in the same womb with mine? — Out upon it! What is there should stop me now? The lesser crimes of earth, the smaller violences, seem ground into unseen dust by this greater crime. Abbé, I will buy her of Villequier! — I know how to win him! — I will force her to love me, or she shall hate her husband! What is there shall stop me now? I will buy the priest as well as the ring, or the wedding garment; and she shall be mine, whether her heart be mine or not!"

While he spoke the Abbé de Boisguerin gazed upon him with one of his calm dark smiles; but upon the present occasion that smile upon the lip was at variance with a slight frown upon his brow. He replied little, however, saying merely, "It is so, Gaspar! It is so, that men seek to enjoy the fruit, and yet regret the means. They will never find happiness thus, however."

"Happiness!" exclaimed the Marquis, with a look of agony upon his face. "Is there such a thing as happiness? Oh yes, there is, and I once knew it, when together with that brother who is now no more, and you also, my friend, undisturbed by stormy passions, content with that I had, blessed with the only friendship and affection that was needful to content, I passed the sunny hours in sport and joy, and scarcely knew the common pains incident to man's general nature. And you have aided to destroy this state, and you have helped to drive me forth from happiness, to blot it out so entirely, that I could almost forget it ever existed."

"No, no, Gaspar of Montsoreau!" exclaimed the Abbé quickly, "I have not done any of these things you talk of. I have not aided in any one degree to take from you the happiness you formerly had. There is but one secret for the preservation of happiness, Gaspar. It matters not what is the object of desire, for any thing that we thirst for really may give us happiness in

nearly the same portion as another. Happiness is gained by the right estimation of the means. If a man ever uses means that he regrets, to obtain any object that he desires, he loses the double happiness which may be obtained in life, the happiness of pursuit and the happiness of enjoyment. Every means must, of course, be proportioned to its end; where much is to be won, much must be risked or paid: but the firm strong mind, the powerful understanding, weighs the object against the price; and, if it be worthy, whatever that price may be, after it is once paid and the object attained, regrets not the payment. It is like an idle child who covets a gilt toy, spoils it in half an hour, and then regrets the money it has cost, ever to sorrow over means we have used, when those means have proved successful. Say not, Gaspar, that I disturbed your happiness! While you were in your own lands, enjoying the calm pleasures of a provincial life, knowing no joys, seeking no pleasures but those which, like light winds that ruffle

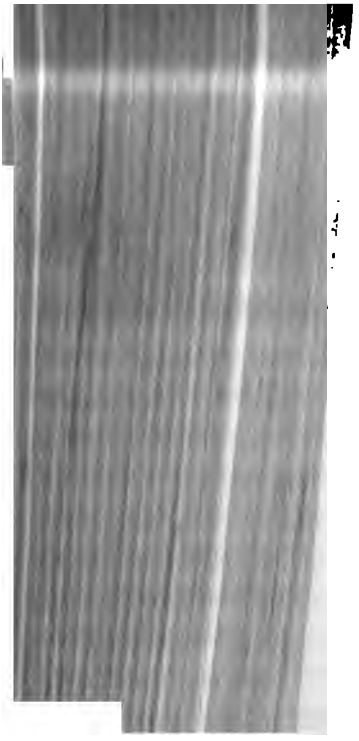
the surface and plough not up the bosom of the water, amuse the mind but never agitate the heart, I lived contented and happy amongst you, believing that, but once or twice at most in the life of man, a joy is set before him, which is worthy of being bartered against amusement. I joined in all your sports, I furnished you with new sources of the same calm pleasures; and as long as I saw the passions were shut out, I sought no change for myself or for you either. But when the moment came, that strong and deep passions were to be introduced; when I saw that your heart, and that of your brother, like the moulded figure by the demigod, had been touched with the ethereal fire, and woke from slumber never to sleep again, then it was but befitting that I should aid him who confided in me, in the pursuit that he was now destined to follow. If the object was a great and worthy one, the means to obtain it were necessarily powerful and hazardous. No man ought to yield his repose for any thing that is not worth all risks; but having once begun the course, he must go

on; and weak and idle is he who cannot overleap the barriers that he meets with, or, when the race is won, turns to regret this flower or that which he may have trampled down in his course."

"You are harsh, Abbé," replied the Marquis thoughtfully, somewhat shaken by his words — for though the wounds of remorse admit no balm, they are sometimes forgotten in strong excitement. "You are harsh, but yet it is a terrible thing to have slain one's brother."

"It is," replied the Abbé; "but circumstances give the value of every fact. It is a terrible thing to slay any human being; to take the life of a creature, full of the same high intelligences as ourselves: but if I slay that man in a room, and for no purpose, it is called murder; if I slay him in a battle-field, in order to obtain a crown, it is a glorious act, and worthy of immortal renown."

The Marquis listened to his sophistry, eager to take any theme of consolation to his heart. But any one who heard him, would have sup-



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The Marquis waved his hand impatiently, saying, "I cannot—I will not talk of such things now. Leave me, Abbé, leave me! I can but grieve; there is no way that I can turn without encountering sorrow."

The Abbè turned and left him; and descending the steps into the gardens, he walked on in the calm sunshine, as tranquilly as if purity and holiness had dwelt within his breast. "I must bear this yet a while longer," he said to himself. "But now, if I could find some enthusiastic priest, full of wild eloquence, such as we have in Italy, to seize this deep moment of remorse, we might do much with him to make him abjure this pursuit; perhaps abjure the world! The foolish boy thinks that it was his hand that did it, and does not know that I fired at all, when his hand shook so that he could not well have struck him. Perhaps there may be such a priest as I need up there," he continued, looking towards Augoulème, "perhaps there may be such a priest up there, of the kind I want. Epernon has his fits of devotion too, I believe. At all events, I will go up and

see. The madder the better for my
pose."

Thus saying he called some servants,
dered his horse, and, as soon as it was brou
rode away towards Augoulème.

CHAP. V.

GASPAR DE MONTSOREAU remained in the same position in which the Abbé had left him for nearly an hour, and the struggle of the various passions which agitated his heart, were perhaps as terrible as any that had ever been known to human being. His situation, indeed, was one which exposed him more than most men are ever exposed, to the contention of the most opposite feelings. He had not been led gradually on, as many are, step by step, to evil; but he had been taken from the midst of warm and kindly feelings, from the practice of right, and an habitual course of calm and tranquil enjoyment, and by the mastery of one strong and violent passion had been plunged into the midst of crimes which had left anguish and remorse behind them.

Still, however, the passion which had at first

led him astray, existed in all its fierceness and all its intensity; and, like some quiet field — from which the husbandman has been accustomed to gather yearly, in the calm sunshine, a rich and kindly harvest — when suddenly made the place of strife by contending armies, his heart, so tranquil and so happy not a year before, had now become the battle-place of remorse and love.

Sometimes the words of the Abbé came back upon his ear, urging him to abandon for ever, as a penance for his crime, the pursuit which had already led him to such awful deeds; but then again the thought of Marie de Clairvaut, of never beholding that beautiful being again, of yielding her for ever, perhaps, to the arms of others, came across his brain, and almost drove him mad.

Then would rush remorse again upon his heart, the features of his brother rose up before him, his graceful form seemed to move within his sight; the frank warm-hearted, kindly smile, that had ever greeted him when they met, was now painted by memory to his eye; and many a trait of generous kindness, many

a noble, many an endearing act, the words and jests of boyhood and infancy, the long remembered sports of early years, the accidents, the adventures, the tender and twining associations of youth and happiness, forgotten in the strife of passion and the contention of rivalry, now came back, as vividly as the things of yesterday — came back, alas! now that death had ended the struggle, rendered the deeds of the past irreparable, thrown the pall of remorse over the last few months, and left memory alone to deck the tomb of the dead with bright flowers gathered from their spring of life.

It was too much to bear: he turned back again to the words, not of consolation but of incitement, which the Abbé had spoken to him. He tried to think it was folly to regret what had been done; he tried to recollect that it was in a scene of contention, and in moments of strife, that his brother had fallen; he strove to persuade himself that Marie de Clairvaut had been under his care and guidance and direction, and that his brother Charles had had no right even to attempt to take her out of his

hands. He laboured, in short, to steel his heart; to render it as hard iron, in order to resist the things that it had to endure. He sought anxiously to rouse it into activity; and he tried to fix his mind still upon the thoughts of winning Marie de Clairvaut. He resolved, at whatever price, by whatever sacrifice, to gain her, to possess her, to make her his own beyond recall: with the eagerness of passion and the recklessness of remorse, he determined to pursue his course, trusting, as many have idly trusted, that he should induce the woman, whose affections and feelings he forced, to love the man to whose passions she was made a sacrifice.

The struggle was still going on, the voice of conscience was raising itself loudly from time to time, memory was doing her work, and passion was opposing all, when, without hearing any step, or knowing that any one had arrived at the house, he felt a hand quietly laid upon his arm, and starting up with a feeling almost of terror, which was unusual to him, he beheld the dark and sinister, though handsome, countenance of Villequier.

The courtier grasped his hand with enthusiastic warmth, and gazed in his face with a look of deep interest. "You are sad, Monsieur de Montsoreau," he said; "I grieve to see you so sad. I fear that the news which I came to break to you has been told you, perhaps, in a rash and inconsiderate manner. You are aware then that your brother is no more. I hoped to have been in time, for I only heard it the day before yesterday, in the evening, from the Duke of Guise, who is now with the King, and, as you know, all powerful."

Gaspar de Montsoreau heard him to an end, and then merely bowed his head, saying, "I have heard all, Monsieur de Villequier." But although he saw that his companion — who had more than once witnessed the fierceness of his feelings towards his brother regarding Mademoiselle de Clairvaut — was surprised at the deep grief he now betrayed, he dared not let him know how much that grief was aggravated by remorse, from the belief that his own hand had cut the thread of his brother's life.

"I am sorry, Monsieur de Montsoreau," ad-

ded Villequier, "to see you so deeply affected by this matter. Pray remember, that though Monsieur de Logères was your brother, he was struggling with you for the hand of the person you love, and that his being now removed, renders your hope of obtaining the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut no longer doubtful and remote, but certain and almost immediate."

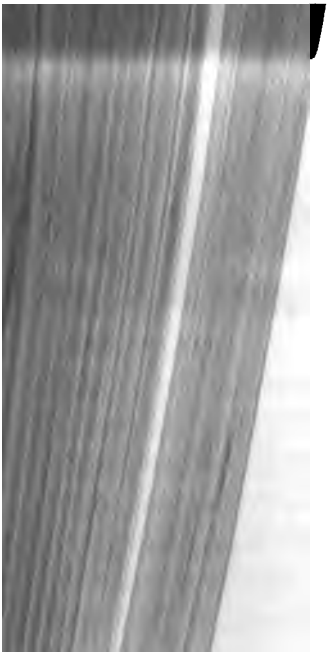
"I see not the matter in the same cheering light that you do, Monsieur de Villequier," replied Gaspar de Montsoreau thoughtfully. "You say, and I hear also that it is so, that the Duke of Guise is now all powerful with the King; if such be the case, what results have we to anticipate? Do you think that the Duke of Guise will ever consent to the union of his ward with me? Do you think that, prejudging the question as he has already done, he will give me the bride that he promised to my brother? Have I not heard from those who were present, that he has sworn by all he holds sacred, that never, under any circumstances, should she be mine?"

"The Duke of Guise is not immortal," replied Villequier drily; "and his death leaves her wholly in my power. Should such an event

not take place, however, and the period of her attaining free agency approach, we must risk a little should need be, and employ a certain degree of gentle compulsion to drive or lead her to that which we desire."

"When will it be?" demanded Gaspar of Montsoreau. "Why should we pause? why should we risk any thing by delay?"

"She becomes a free agent by the law," replied Villequier, "on the morrow of next Christmas. If that day passes, it is true, prayers and supplications will be all that can be used, for the Parliament will extend its protection to her, and not the King himself can force her to wed any one she does not choose. Before that period her guardian can, for such is the feudal law of this realm, that she can be forced either to resign her lands or produce some one in her stead to lead her retainers in the King's service. The law has been somewhat stretched, it is true; but on more than one occasion, with the consent of the King, the guardian of a young lady difficult to please, has compelled her to make a choice, and the Parliament has sanctioned the act."



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stop to their opposition, and to remove them from the way in which we are proceeding. Now, the Duke of Guise has been very busily teaching a number of persons, both high and low, that his prolonged life would be extremely inconvenient to them. Biron does not love him, D'Aumont abominates him, D'O. has good cause to wish him a step beyond Jerusalem; Henry of Navarre has in him a bitter enemy; the rash, vain, Count of Soissons an obstacle and a stumbling-block; and though I am his humble servant, and the King his very good friend, yet both Henry and myself could do quite as well without him. Besides these, there are at least ten thousand more in France who would walk with their beavers far more gallantly, if there were a Guise the less in the world; so that I say, on very probable reasoning, that I would fully as soon reckon upon the life of a man of eighty, as I would upon the robust, powerful existence of Henry of Guise even for an hour. But putting all that aside, Monsieur de Montsoreau, taking it for granted that he lives, what can I do but what I propose? You have the King's promise

and mine in writing; we can do no more. The cause is before the Parliament, and Henry, restrained in his own court, at war with his own subjects, and driven from his own capital, depend upon it, will never sign your contract of marriage with Mademoiselle de Clairvaut till every other hope has failed; ay, and what is more, till he sees before him a very very great object to be gained by so doing."

"A fresh object you mean, Monsieur de Villequier," replied Gaspar de Montsoreau." "I know that this is the way in which kings and statesmen deal with men less wise than themselves. There must be always one object secured to obtain the promise, and another to obtain the performance. Pray, what is the new object, Monsieur de Villequier? and is it sure, that if an object be held out of sufficient worth and importance, the King will not find some specious reason for drawing back, or that some new irresistible obstacle does not present itself?

"Consider the King's situation, Monsieur de Montsoreau," replied Villequier, "with the Duke of Guise constantly at his side, dictating

to him all his movements, with the question of guardianship even now lying before the Parliament, he would run the very greatest risk at this moment if he were to do as we both wish, and forcibly hurry on this business to a conclusion. But the aspect of affairs is changing every day, — the Count of Soissons has come to join him; Henry of Navarre himself has sent him offers of assistance and support; Epernon, roused into activity, is levying forces in all parts of the country; every day the King may expect to make some way against the party of his adversaries; and therefore every day is something gained. But even were it not so very hazardous to attempt any thing of the kind at present, you could not expect the King to risk much, and embarrass his policy for your sake, without some individual motive. That this business should take place, is your strong and intense desire. It is very natural that it should be so; but neither the King nor myself have any such feelings, passions, or wishes. Let us each have our advantage, or our gratification, in that which is to ensue, and

I will undertake, and pledge myself in the most solemn manner, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut shall be your wife before next Christmas-day."

Gaspar de Montsoreau paused, and thought carefully over all that had been said. "I thank you, Monsieur de Villequier," he said, "for speaking freely in this matter. Let us cast away all idle delicacy. Things have happened to me lately which have taught me to hold all such empty verbiage at naught. Let us look upon this business as a matter of dealing, a matter of merchandise."

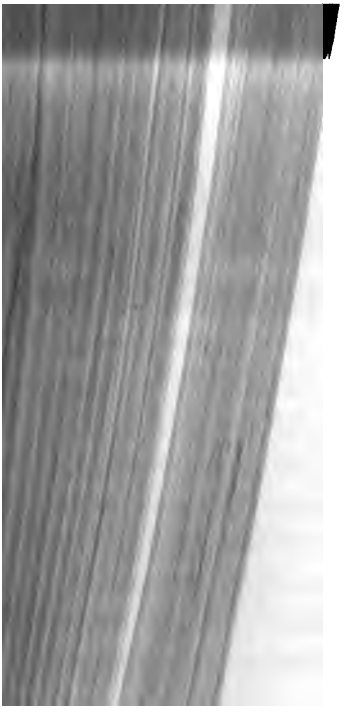
"Exactly!" replied Villequier raising his eyes slightly, but not seeming in the least degree offended. "Let us consider it in such a light. Every matter of policy is but trade upon a large scale."

"Well then," continued Gaspar de Montsoreau in the same bold tone, "I will look upon you and the King, Monsieur de Villequier, as two partners in a mercantile house. Now, what sort of merchandise is it that you would prefer to have in barter for your signature to my marriage

contract with this young Lady. Shall it be money?"

"Money!" exclaimed Villequier, "with a slight ironical smile playing about the corners of his mouth. "Have you any money? It is indeed a surprising thing to hear any one talk of money except the Duke of Guise, or the Duke of Epernon. Why, Bellievre assures me, upon his honour, that the very dispatch which he was ordered to send to Soissons, to forbid positively the Duke of Guise coming to Paris, was stopped, for what reason think you? Because, when he took it down to the treasury, there was not found fifty livres to pay the courier's expenses. The courier would not go without the money, Bellievre had none to give him, so between them both they carried the King's dispatch to the post, and put it in with the common letters. The letters went to Rheims before they were sent to Soissons, and the Duke of Guise was in Paris, while the order to forbid him was on the road.* Money? Oh certainly, money above

* This is historically true in regard to one of the dispatches to the Duke of Guise; and in representing Henry and his



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"But remember, Monsieur de Villequier," replied Gaspar of Montsoreau, not quite liking the levity of his companion's speech, "this is no jesting matter with me, whatever it may be with you; and I must have such sure and perfect warranty that you will not betray my hopes again, or ask for even the slightest further delay, that there cannot be a doubt rest upon my mind; otherwise ——"

"Otherwise what, Monsieur de Montsoreau?" demanded Villequier. "If we do not keep our words, you know we shall lose the great advantage that we hope to gain from you. That is the surest bond! Let the matter stand thus, sir: if this marriage do take place, as I have promised you it shall, the hundred thousand crowns of gold are paid; if not, we are the losers. I see no alternative beyond this."

"By Heavens! but there is, and there shall be one," answered Gaspar de Montsoreau impetuously. "I see that Monsieur de Villequier, who is supposed to count upon every chance and circumstance collateral and direct, has forgotten one or two points, although he has not for-

gotten that I am heir of my brother's lands, both of Logères and Morly. But I will only put him in mind of what might take place on either side. The King and Monsieur de Villequier might find obstacles of great import rise up against my wishes, or they might find greater advantages in some other quarter; they might think it worth while to keep me trifling in inactivity, or employ me in their service against the enemy. They might do all this, and then forego the sum named for a greater. I, on the other hand, Monsieur de Villequier, might see wavering and hesitation; I might grow tired of waiting and dependence; I might say to-morrow I have no certainty in this business, and I might give my banner to the wind, broider the cross of the League upon my breast, or assume the double cross of Lorraine, and either range the spears of Montsoreau and Logères in the ranks of the army of Mayenne, or marching to Chartres, Tours, or Blois, might bow me lowly to my Lord of Guise, and begging him to forget the past, swear myself his faithful servant."

Villequier gazed on him for a moment with certainly not the most friendly expression of countenance, and was about to speak; but the young Marquis, conscious of his own importance, waved his hand, saying, "Nay, nay, Monsieur de Villequier! on all and on every account the plan I am about to propose is the only one that can be followed. Of course, in dealing with his Majesty, I cannot treat as crown to crown;" and he smiled somewhat bitterly. "But I must treat with you as gentleman to gentleman, and leave you to entreat his Majesty—urgently and zealously, as I doubt not you will do it, to accede graciously to our views. Thus then shall it be, that you and the King shall enter into a bond with me, by which you shall engage that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut shall, with the full consent of both parties expressed by their signature to our marriage-contract, become my wife on or before next Christmas-day, and in default shall be subject to amercement in whatsoever amount the Parliament of Paris may judge that I am damaged by the want of performance. This is merely to secure that

the matter be explicit; and in the same bond may be placed my engagement to pay the sum named, upon the fulfilment of the contract. This is fair, and only fair; and you know my last resolve."

"In truth, Monsieur de Montsoreau," replied Villequier, "if you knew but the state of our finances, you would see that we are far more likely to be so eager in concluding this business as even to risk dangerous consequences, than to trifle with you in any degree."

He remembered the curious engagement that he had entered into with the Abbé de Boisguerin, and he paused a moment, in hopes that Gaspar de Montsoreau might show even the slightest sign of hesitation: but, so far from it, the frown deepened on the young nobleman's brow, and he replied sharply, "I will trust to no contingencies, Monsieur de Villequier. These are changing times, as you well know. The cross Fleurdelisée in your arms * may well be changed, by the golden billets

* Such were the arms of the Villequier family.

dropped around it, into the cross of Lorraine. If what I have offered be as good as you say, there is no earthly reason why his Majesty of France or yourself, Monsieur de Villequier, should object to enter into the engagement with me that I propose."

"Well," answered Villequier; "well, I must do my best with the King; but I dare say, Monsieur de Montsoreau," he said in a lower voice, "I dare say you are well aware that a little compulsion, perhaps, must be used in this instance."

He thought he saw hesitation, and he went on the more eagerly, for he wished to avoid the written engagement. "I must be permitted to use what means I think fit to wring consent from the young Lady herself. Nor must I have one word of objection on your part, whatever you see or hear — no asking for delay! — no yielding to her tears. One word of such a kind, remember, vitiates the engagement upon our part, but leaves you as strictly bound as ever."

Gaspar de Montsoreau gazed down upon the ground sternly for several moments, with his

brows contracting, till his eyes were nearly hid beneath them. His fingers were seen to clasp into the palms of his hands, as if the nails would have buried themselves there. But after a short and terrible struggle, the evil spirit maintained its ascendancy, and he exclaimed, "Be it so! Be it so! But in the meantime, sir," he continued abruptly, "there is one thing I have to demand. How have I been led with hopes, and meeting nothing but disappointments, for the last two months. I who dared all, and underwent all, to snatch her once more from the power of the Guises. When forced to fly, it was under your power and in your charge I left her; and yet, though this is the fourth or fifth time that you and I have met, I have never been able to see her, or to learn distinctly where she is. This must be no longer, Monsieur de Villequier. I need consolation; I need comfort; the only comfort or consolation I can find is in her presence and in her society. Where is she?—I demand to know where she is. I was brought to Augoulême by information that she was in the neigh-

bourhood; but I cannot discover her, and I will be trifled with no longer."

"By all I hold sacred," exclaimed Villequier, not a little surprised by the bold and daring tone and decided manner, which the young nobleman had so suddenly put on, "By all I hold sacred ——"

"What is that, sir?" demanded Gaspar de Montsoreau.

Villequier smiled. "Oh many things, Monsieur de Montsoreau," he answered; "I hold many things sacred. But with any oath or abjuration that you think most convenient, I assure you that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut is not under my charge, or in my power at this moment."

"But was so how long ago?" demanded the Marquis.

"About a fortnight," replied Villequier cooly. "The fact is, Monsieur de Montsoreau, that his high and mighty Highness, the Duke of Guise, having come to pay a humble visit to his Majesty — to congratulate him, I suppose, on being driven out of Paris, — gave significant

notice to the King, on their first interview at Chartres, that he believed Mademoiselle de Clairvaut to be in my hands, and that he would have her instantly delivered up. I was not present, you know, but every thing passed as the Guises wished. I dare say you have heard all the rest; Epernon was banished, and fled to Angoulême here, stripped of his high posts and manifold emoluments; Guise was created generalissimo of the King's armies; in fact, Guise dictated the law to the King, and Henry was fain to forget all the past, or to cover the bitter memory with a jest."

"But to the point; to the point, Monsieur de Villequier," said the Marquis de Montsoreau. "What of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut?"

"Why, the King told me," replied Villequier, "that the Duke demanded her at all events till the Parliament of Paris had decided our cause. The next day the Duke and I had an interview on the subject; but ere that, I had placed her in the hands of a friend, and begged him to remove her for a time from the house where she then was. The Duke was as imperious and

unceremonious as an executioner. He vowed that I should give her up to him at once; and though we did our best to deceive him, exactly as we had done with your wild thoughtless brother, the Duke did not so easily believe us; and both I and the King were obliged to swear upon the mass that she was not in our power, and that we knew not where she was. That was easily done; but Henry's low laugh had nearly betrayed the whole; and the Duke swore loudly, and menaced high, that if he were deceived, he would have vengeance."

"And now, Monsieur de Villequier," said the Marquis, "where is she now? And who is the friend in whose hands you have placed her?"

Villequier paused for a single moment, as if to consider whether he should tell him or not. But a moment after he answered with a smile, "The friend in whose hands she is placed, Monsieur de Montsoreau, is one in whom at that time you yourself placed great confidence. I trust the same feelings exist still towards him. I mean the Abbé de Boisguerin."

Gaspar de Montsoreau started at the intelligence with feelings of angry dissatisfaction, which he could hardly account for to himself, but which he instantly strove to conceal from the keen eyes of the artful man with whom he was dealing. The exclamation of "Indeed!" however, which broke from his lips, was uttered in a tone which instantly showed Villequier that the tidings were by no means pleasing; and while he suffered the young Marquis to digest them at leisure he laid out in his own mind a plan for keeping the Abbé and his former pupil at variance, not with any clear and definite object, indeed, but for the purpose of having a check upon the young Marquis at any future moment, in case of necessity. Villequier felt, too, that the clear, artful, and unscrupulous mind of the Abbé de Boisguerin was far better fitted to deal with, and frustrate him in any purpose that he might entertain, than that of the young Marquis, which, though not deficient either in acuteness or policy, was constantly misled by inexperience, or by

the impetuosity of strong passions. He felt that the counsels of the Abbé might under many circumstances, if given sincerely, be a safeguard to Gaspar de Montsoreau against his arts; and he therefore saw no slight advantage in encouraging feelings of doubt and dissatisfaction in the mind of his young companion.

"It is surprising," said the Marquis, "that the Abbé did not communicate to me the facts which you have mentioned, Monsieur de Villequier; but I suppose that you bound him down to secrecy."

"To general secrecy," replied Villequier, "as was absolutely necessary. But you, of course, as my friend, and as the person most interested — you, of course, were excepted. No, Monsieur de Montsoreau, no! In this business the Abbé has acted upon his own judgment. He was then at Blois, you know. I was in great haste, knew no other person to whom I could apply, and therefore entrusted him with the task, thinking him also,

at that time, you must remember, sincerely, truly, and devotedly your friend."

"And have you any cause, Monsieur de Villequier," demanded the Marquis, "have you any cause to suppose now that he is not my friend?"

"Nay, Monsieur de Montsoreau!" replied Villequier." If you are satisfied, I have nothing to say. I only thought you seemed dissatisfied, and ——"

"And what, Monsieur de Villequier?" demanded the Marquis, seeing that he paused.

"I was going to say," replied Villequier, "that it might be as well for you to be upon your guard. We are living in troublous times, Monsieur de Montsoreau. We are both of us placed in a delicate situation; every word and action ought to be guided by policy and forethought; and though I do not wish to wound the delicacy of your friendship towards your relation and friend, Monsieur de Boisguerin, yet we all know that he is a skilful politician, and that when, some years ago, even as a young man he appeared at the Court of

France, her Majesty the Queen-mother was heard to say, she was glad when he was gone, for she was confident that he would outwit Satan himself, and therefore might go far to outwit her."

"I should not mind his policy," replied the Marquis. "I should not mind his policy, if you had not insinuated doubts as to whether he was at heart my friend."

Villequier answered nothing, but gazed down upon the ground with his brow somewhat contracted, and then stirred the rushes on the floor with the point of his sword, as if determined not to make any reply.

"You are silent, Monsieur de Villequier," said Gaspar of Montsoreau; "and yet there is hanging a cloud of much thought upon your brow, as if there were intelligence in your breast which you could give, but would not. I beseech you, if you are really friendly to me — or to speak more plainly — if our interests in this business are in some degree linked together, I beseech you to let me know fully and fairly

what you think, and what you know, of the Abbé de Boisguerin."

"Thus adjured, Monsieur de Montsoreau," replied Villequier, "I can but answer you, that I do not think Monsieur de Boisguerin is as friendly to you as you suppose. Depend upon it, he has his own purposes to answer first, and you are but a secondary consideration, if not, perhaps, a tool."

"These are grave charges, sir," said Gaspar de Montsoreau, somewhat angry at the term tool. "I should like to have some proofs to sustain them."

"See! you are angry already," cried Villequier. However, at the present moment I have no proofs to give. At some future time—ay, before the period of your marriage with Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, I may give you such proof of what is the Abbé's real character and real feelings towards you, that you will say I am well justified. In the meantime I have warned you sufficiently to put you on your guard. That is enough for the present moment: you must act as you think fit; but still you

will be prepared. Farther, I have only to say, that it is not I that keep you from seeing Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. You have my full will and consent to see her whom you will. I would not, indeed, have you visit her too often, lest discovery should ensue, and Guise obtain possession of her at once. But your own discretion must be your guide. I will now leave you, Monsieur de Montsoreau; and, depend upon it, you will not find that I will fail you in any of the promises I have made, and will very soon return to you with the business arranged by the King, in the manner that you desire. We must then wait until further delay be judged dangerous: then if nothing occurs to relieve us from the other obstacles, we must in the end step over them; and, forgetting a little law, conclude your marriage, whether the Parliament awards me the guardianship or not. When once she is made your wife, they cannot easily unwife her."

Gaspar de Montsoreau, full of thoughts rather than words, did not pursue the conversation further. "I have but shown you scanty

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"I thank you mo
plied Villequier. "B
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Epernon to-night, for
from the King."

Thus saying, after v
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more thought over the
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him to me for ever.
relation, and I could
alliance in France.

gères; it is a wonderful combination! But even, were it not for that—were it half as good, where should I get the man in France who would give a hundred thousand golden crowns for the possession of such a cold piece of pretty marble as that."

CHAP. VI.

WHILE the conversation just narrated was taking place, and the character and views of the Abbé de Boisguerin were being commented upon in a manner which he could but little have wished, he himself was pursuing his way towards the town of Angoulême, with feelings and purposes varying at every step; though in his case it was not the slightest sting of remorse or regret which occasioned this vacillation of purpose.

Probably there never was a man on earth who wholly and entirely stilled the voice of conscience, and there might be moments when the Abbé's own heart reproached him for things which he had done. But the habit of his thoughts was different. He had been brought up in a school where right and wrong were so frequently confounded for the purpose of main-

taining the temporal dominion of the church that, at a very early period of his life, he had arrived at that conclusion, which the sceptical followers of Pyrrho arrive at by a more lengthened process, namely, that on earth there is no absolute and invariable right and wrong.

The Jesuits had taught him, that what was wrong under some circumstances, and marked by the reprobation both of God and man, was right under other circumstances, and even praiseworthy; and forgetting the cautious restrictions under which the wiser and the better members of the order attempted, though vainly, to guard the doctrine, his keen and clear mind at once determined, that if fraud could ever be pious, virtue of any kind could be but a name. If there were no invariable and universal standard: if his thoughts and his actions were to be governed by the opinions, and directed to the purposes of men, the only rule of virtue, he saw, must be the approbation of others like himself; and as every course of action must have an end and object to secure energy in pursuing it, he readily fell into the belief that

gratification was the great object, and men's good opinion but to be sought as a means to that end.

It may be easily conceived how far he went on upon such a course of reasoning. It naturally ended in the disbelief of every thing that other men hold sacred: yet he put on all the semblances of religion; for as he believed in no hereafter, to do so, did not seem to him an impious mockery, but merely an unmeaning ceremony required by society. Every thing had become with him a matter of calculation; any thing that was to be obtained, was to be obtained by a certain price; and, as he himself declared, he never regretted giving any price, provided the object was attained, and was of equal value.

It was his passions alone that led him wrong, and made him calculate falsely. They had done so more than once in life, but yet not frequently; not indeed that he sought to subdue them, but that they were not naturally easily roused.

It was no remorse then, or regret, that moved him in the varying state of his thoughts as he rode on. It was doubt as to the means that he was

employing; it was doubt as to whether the strong passion, which he felt within his breast, was not blinding his eyes, and misleading his judgment, as to the choice of paths and instruments. He felt that on the present occasion he calculated not so coolly as he was accustomed to do; he felt that the object he had proposed to himself—or rather which passion, and rash passion had suggested—was one so great and so little likely to be obtained, that the means employed must be great and extraordinary also; and that no single false step could be taken without the loss of every hope. His sensations were all strangely complicated, however. He felt and reproached himself for feeling that the passion in his heart had grown up so powerful, so overwhelming, that when he thought of staking life itself upon the issue, not a hesitation crossed his mind, and that he was ready to say, like a love-sick boy, "Let me die, if she be not mine!" But with that passion, he had mingled ambition, both as a means and as an end; prospects had opened before his eyes which had roused in his heart aspirations, which he thought he had put down;

and not only to succeed in his love, but to gild that love with pageantry and state and power, had now become his object.

Still, however, he remembered that in grasping at these high things, he might overlook matters which would prevent him reaching them; and after riding on quickly for some time, he drew in his rein, to think more calmly, to review his situation, and to calculate exactly all the important, the critical steps which were now to be taken.

"What am I next going to do?" he thought. "To seek for a priest, who may work upon that impetuous, weak-minded boy, to yield the object of his passion, because, in the pursuit thereof, he has shed his brother's blood. And yet, is it likely that he will yield it? No! I fear not! and yet stronger minds than his have been bowed down by superstition to greater sacrifices. He may, it is true; and it may be as well to secure that chance: but then, even then, only one small step is gained. If one could get him to yield all his great possessions at the same time, that were something! But he will not do

that! Two centuries ago we would have sent him to the holy land: but those good times are past. What then is to be done?—To hurry him on into some rash enterprise, and sharing his danger, take the equal chance of which shall live and which shall die?—That were a gamester's policy indeed.—No! we must find more easy means than that."

"However," continued the Abbé, after a pause "in the meantime, I must strike for myself alone. She hates and abhors him evidently. I myself have been too rash and rough with her. My passion has been too impetuous—too fiery. I know that those women who seem so cold and circumspect are often like Ætna, icy above but with fire at the heart. But I have been rash. She will easily forgive that offence, however, and forget it too, when I can woo her as one unbound by the clerical vows, and companion of the high and great. I must lose no time, however, for events are drawing clearly to a mighty issue. Here is the party of Henry, and the party of the League. I must choose between the two without delay. And yet the choice is soon

made. In the first place, it would be long ere Guise would trust me: in the next, he would never love me: in the next, he himself is not long lived. As I have seen a bird, when hit by a skilful fowler, tower high into the air before it falls, so Guise is soaring up with mighty effort, which will end but in his own destruction. I will away to Epernon at once. He is the man whose fortunes will yet rise; his unconquerable spirit, his courage, determination, and activity, his gross selfishness, his insolence, his very weakness, will all contribute to support him still. This is a world in which such things thrive! Epernon must be the man; and if I show him such cause as I can show him, he may well be glad to attach me to himself, as increasing his power and enhancing his importance with the King. It is to him I will go! Doubtless his reverses have humbled him somewhat, otherwise it were no light task to deal on such subjects with Epernon."

In judging of Epernon the Abbé judged by mankind in general, for in almost every breast pride is a cowardly quality, and once depressed

sinks into grovelling submission. Epernon, however, was the exception to the general rule, and seemed rather to rise in haughtiness under adversity.

With thoughts like those which we have just detailed, the Abbé spurred on towards Angoulême; but as he began to climb the steep ascent, he saw several indications of popular emotion, which made him hesitate for a moment, as to whether he should proceed or not. There were two or three groups of citizens all speaking eagerly together, and in low tones; and at the gates of the city he remarked a man whom he had seen before, and knew to be the mayor of the place, conversing in a low tone, but in what seemed an anxious manner, with the soldiers of the Corps de Garde. The Abbé contrived to make his horse pass as near them as possible, but at the same time affected to be deeply busied with his own thoughts while really listening attentively to their conversation. He could only catch, however, the end of one sentence and the beginning of a reply:—

"This Duke — a proud insufferable tyrant," said the voice of the mayor.

"Get along; if you were not what you are, I would put my pike into you," replied the soldier; and went on with some observations upon his companion's conduct, not very complimentary, the whole of which the Abbé de Boisguerin did not hear.

As he advanced into the town, however, his keen eye remarked many more signs and symptoms of the same kind, from all of which he drew his own deductions; and on entering the castle, which was then inhabited by the Duke of Epernon, he dismounted in the court of the guard-house, as it was called, where there were a considerable number of the Duke's soldiery loitering about. Though it was not the usual place for visitors to dismount, they suffered him to attach his horse to one of the large iron hooks in the wall, and in a few minutes after he was in the presence of the Duke of Epernon. Not a trace of humiliation or abasement was to be seen in the Duke's countenance or demeanour. He was as proud, as fierce, as

fiery as ever; and although he received the Abbé, having seen him more than once in Paris during the late events, and entertaining that degree of consideration for him which a keen and powerful mind almost always commands, he nevertheless seemed to doubt whether he should ask him even to sit down, and did it at length with an air of condescension.

"Well, Monsieur de Boisguerin," he said at length, "to what do I owe this visit?"

"I come, my Lord," replied the Abbé without a moment's hesitation, "to offer your Lordship my poor services."

The Duke smiled. "They are of course," he said, "welcome, Monsieur de Boisguerin. But the time of offering them is somewhat singular, when all men think my fortunes on the decline, or, perhaps, I should say, utterly down."

"Such it may seem to them, my Lord," replied the Abbé; "but such it seems not to me. There are sciences, my Lord, which teach us what the future is destined to produce; and I own that I am quite selfish in

my present act, seeking to attach myself to one who is yet destined to uphold the throne of France, to affect the fortunes of the times, to triumph over all his enemies, and to outlive most of them now living."

"Indeed!" said the Duke thoughtfully; "and am I to believe this prophecy seriously?"

"Most seriously, my Lord," replied the Abbé. "I myself believe it and know it, as I believe and know the great fortunes that are likely to attend myself — otherwise, perhaps, you might not have seen me here to-day."

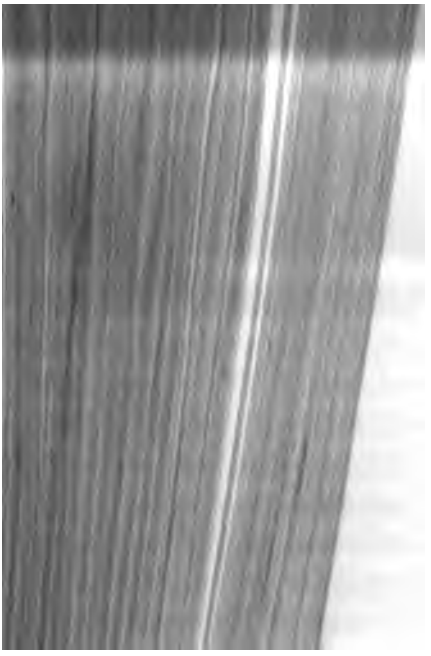
"That is candid, at all events," said the Duke; "and to say truth, I think that your prophecy, in some things, may be right; for I feel within my breast that undiminished power, that sense of my own strength, that confidence in my own destiny, which surely never can be given to a falling man. But you spoke of your own future high fortunes, sir. What may they be?"

The Abbé paused and looked down for a moment, but then replied, "I tell not the prophecy to every one, my Lord; but to you,

to whose services I hope to dedicate those high fortunes, I fear not to relate it. It was pronounced long ago, in the city of Rome, when I was there studying, and as a rash young man had entangled myself in an affair with a fair girl of the city, who suffered our intercourse to be discovered, and consequently well nigh ruined all my prospects. I thought indeed it was so, and was turning my back upon Rome for ever, when I met with an old monk, who from certain facts I told him drew my horoscope, and assured me that I should find my fate in France; that my fortune would be brought about by the death of two relations far younger than myself; and that I should suddenly take a share in great events, and rule the destiny of others when I least expected it. Such was the old man's prophecy now many years ago; and I have seen no sign of its accomplishment till the present time."

"And what signs have you seen now?" demanded Epernon.

"That I have been suddenly led, my Lord,"



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marriage with Mademoiselle de Clairvaut was talked of."

"Was talked of?" said the Duke. "Is it not talked of still?"

"Why, my Lord," replied the Abbé, "the Lady's evident detestation of the young Marquis has rendered the matter hopeless. You yourself remarked it, when you spoke with her at Vincennes; and he is now convinced of it himself. The grief and depression thus produced have impaired his health; and, indeed, it would seem as if ten years had gone over him, instead of a few months, since all this affair began."

"I hope, Monsieur de Boisguerin," said the Duke of Epernon with a bitter smile, "I hope that you have not been taking too deep lessons of our friend Villequier. I would rather be a prisoner on a charge of high treason, and with Guise for my enemy, than I would be next akin to Villequier, and between him and lands and lordships.

The Abbé's brow grew as dark as night. "My Lord," he said, "I will not affect to

misunderstand you; but I am sure that fate will work out its own will without any aid of mine; and had I been disposed to clear the way for myself, who should have stopped me, or who could have discovered any thing I did, when these two youths have been under my care and guardianship ever since their father's death?"

"I did but jest, Abbé," replied the Duke. "But supposing that the events which you anticipate were really to occur, what would be your conduct then?"

"So sure am I, my Lord," replied the Abbé, "that they will occur, that my conduct has been put beyond doubt. I have already demanded of the Court of Rome to be freed from this black dress; and my last letters from the eternal city announce to me, that the dispensation is already granted, and, drawn up in full form, is now upon the road."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Duke of Epernon. "Is it so, indeed? You must have powerful protectors in the conclave."

"I have," replied the Abbé; "and though his Holiness is not fond of relaxing the vows of any one without some puissant motive; yet, when there is a strong one, he does not let the opportunity of unbinding slip, lest his key should grow rusty. But however, my Lord, supposing these things done away, and I Marquis of Montsoreau and Lord of Logères, my first aim and object would be to raise what power and forces I could, and with my sword, my wealth, and my life, were it necessary, serve his Majesty the King, under him whom I hope soon to see directing the state, namely, the Duke of Epernon, if ——"

"Ay, there is still an *if*," replied the Duke. "Well, sir, what is the condition?"

"It is, my Lord," said the Abbé after a pause, in which it was evident that he considered the way he was to put his demand, "It is, that the Duke of Epernon will pledge me his princely word, that as far as his power and influence go, he will support my claim to the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut."

The Duke actually started back with sur-

prise; and, forgetting altogether the splendid future with which the Abbé had been endeavouring to invest his pretensions, he exclaimed, in a tone of anger and contempt that chafed and galled the spirit of the ambitious man with whom he spoke, "Yours, — yours? Abbé de Boisguerin? you, a poor preceptor in your cousin's house, an insignificant churchman, unbeneficed and unknown — you, to lay claim to the heiress of Clairvaut, a niece of the Guise, a lady nor far removed from a sovereign house? On my soul and honour, I mind me to write to Villequier at once, and bid him marry his cousin to this young Marquis out of hand, in order to save your brains from being cracked altogether!"

"Villequier can marry his cousin to no one," answered the Abbé, "without my full consent. No, nor can the King either!"

"Mort-bleu!" exclaimed Epernon with a scornful laugh. "Vanity and ambition have driven the poor man mad. Get you gone, Monsieur de Boisguerin; get you gone! I

shall not trust with any mighty faith to your fine prophecies."

Though the Abbé de Boisguerin felt no slight inclination to put his hand into his bosom, and taking forth the dagger that lay calmly there, to plunge it up to the hilt in the heart of Epernon, he showed not in the slightest degree the wrath which internally moved him. Nay, the great object that he had in view made him in some degree conquer that wrath, and he replied, "Well, my good Lord, I *will* get me gone. But, before I go, you shall hear another warning, which may enable you to judge whether my divinations are false or not. It is destined that, in the course of to-day or to-morrow, you should encounter a great peril. Remember my words! be upon your guard! and take measures to ensure yourself against danger! Go not out into the streets scantily attended ——"

"Oh no!" replied the Duke with a sneer. "I do not trust myself alone in the streets and high roads without a footboy to hold my horse, like the noble aspirant to the hand of Made-

moiselle de Clairvaut. I am not so bold a ma
nor so loved of the people; and as to chanc
perils, I fear them not."

"Your acts on your own head, my Lor
Duke!" replied his companion. "I give yo
good day." And turning away abruptly, h
passed out of the room through the long corri
dor, and part of the way down the stairs whic
led to the court of the guard.

He was scarcely half way down, however,
when some sounds which he heard coming fro
the other side of the building made him sud
denly stop, listen, and then turn round; and,
with a step of light, he retrod his way to the
chamber where he had left the Duke.

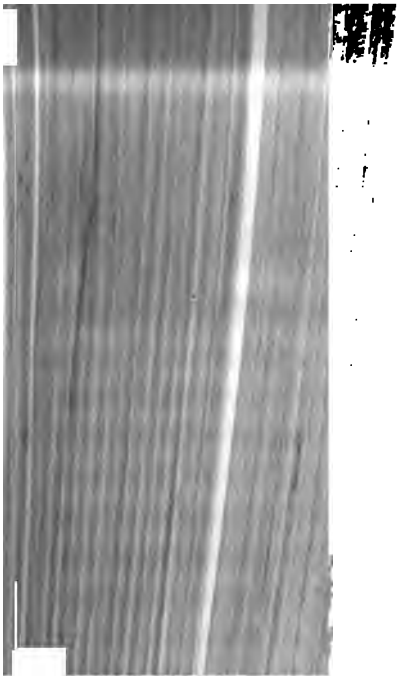
Epernon was busy writing, and looking up
fiercely, demanded "What now?"

"Fly, my Lord, fly quick!" exclaimed the
Abbé. "I come to give you time to save
yourself, for the mayor and his faction are upon
you. They have come in by the great court,
and I think have killed the Swiss at your gate
Believe me, my Lord, for what I say is true

Fly quickly, while I run down to send the guard to your assistance."

His words received instant confirmation, even as the Duke gazed doubtfully in his face; for a door on the opposite side of the room burst open, and a terrified attendant rushed in, while eight or nine fierce faces were seen pursuing him quickly.

The Duke darted to a staircase, which led to a little turret, and the first steps of which entered the room, without any door, just behind his chair. He sprang up eagerly towards the small dressing-room above, and the mayor and his armed companions pursued as fiercely, leaving the Abbé to make his escape towards the court of the guard, without giving any heed to his proceedings. Before the Abbé had passed the door, however, he heard a loud crash, and turned his head to see by what it was occasioned, when, at a single glance he perceived that the very eagerness of his pursuers had saved the Duke of Epernon. Ten or twelve heavily armed men had all rushed at once upon the old and crazy staircase which led to the Duke's



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way; but, on the contrary, crossing the Charente, he rode rapidly onward by the banks of the river, in the direction of that field of Jarnac, where, in his early days, Henry III. had given such striking promises of heroism and conduct which his after life so signally failed to fulfil.

As he rode along, he thought with somewhat of a smile upon his countenance, that his last prophecy to the Duke of Epernon had met with a speedy fulfilment; and he pondered with some bitterness over the parting words which that nobleman had spoken to him.

"The aspirant to the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut," he said to himself, "without a single footboy to hold his horse! That may be in the present instance policy rather than any thing else, my good Lord Duke. But still we may learn wisdom, even, from such bitter words as those. I had forgotten how much all men value the gilded exterior. But it shall be so no longer. This that I aim at must be soon lost or won. I have staked life upon the pursuit, and all that makes life valuable. And why

should I not stake fortune also? 'Fortune buys fortune,' says the old adage; and as the stake is great, so shall my game be bold."

His resolution was instantly taken. He possessed, as we have said before, sufficient wealth to give him competence, and to enable him to mingle with decent splendour in the society in which he was born. But he calculated that the same fortune which put him at ease for life, might afford him the means of magnificence and display, if he resolved to expend the whole within a few years. He did so resolve, saying to himself, "I shall either be at the height of fortune and enjoyment ere two years be over, or I shall be no more. It suits me not to go on playing stake after stake, as many men do, beaten, like a tennis-ball, from prosperity to ruin, and from ruin to prosperity. I have bent myself to one great purpose, and I will attain it or die. That is always within one's power, to shake off life when it is no longer a source of happiness."

As he thus thought, his horse slowly descended a gentle hill by the side of the river, with a

meadow down to the Charente on the one side, and a bank crowned with the wall of a vineyard on the other. Built up against the wall was a little shrine, with a virgin and child behind a net-work of iron, and the votive offering of a silver lamp burning below.

Sitting on the little green spot which topped the bank at that place — after having apparently said his prayers at the foot of the shrine — was a boy of about thirteen or fourteen years of age; and as the Abbé came slowly near, the youth took a pipe out of his pocket and began playing a wild plaintive Italian air, full of rich melody and deep feeling. The music was not new to the Abbé; he had heard it before in other lands, when the few pure feelings of the heart which he had ever possessed had not been crushed, like accidental flowers blossoming on a footpath, by the passing to and fro of other coarser things.

He drew in his horse and paused to listen, and then gazed at the boy, and thought he had seen him somewhere before. The eyes, the features, the expression of the countenance, seemed to be all connected with some old remembrances;

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and soon arrived at the gates of the dwelling to which he had been directed.

He was brought into the presence of the Abbé by an attendant wearing the colours of no noble house in France, and found him with some fruit and wine before him. But in regard to the subject on which the boy expected to be questioned most closely, namely, the death of Charles of Montsoreau, the Abbé spoke not one word. Notwithstanding all his firmness of purpose, notwithstanding the remorseless character of his mind and of his habitual thoughts, he loved not to touch upon the subject of his young cousin's death, unless forced on to do so by circumstances. He spoke of Paris and of the Duke of Guise; and where he had first met with the young Count of Logères, and of all the accidents that had befallen him while in company with Charles of Montsoreau. But he spoke not one word in regard to the day of the barricades, or the young nobleman's death.

From time to time, while he talked with the boy, Ignati saw that the Abbé's eyes fixed upon

his countenance, and at length he asked him "You are an Italian by birth, are you not?"

"I am," replied the boy; "that is, I am a Roman." And he said it with that pride which every person born within the precincts of the ancient queen of empires feels, although glory has long departed from her walls, and the memory of past greatness is rather a reproach than an honour.

"And what is your name?" demanded the Abbé sharply.

"My name is Ignati," answered the youth.

"Ignati!" said the Abbé, "Ignati!" But you have some other name. What was your father's?"

"I do not know," answered the boy, with his cheeks and his brow glowing. "Why do you ask?"

"Your mother's then?" said the Abbé without replying to his question. "Your mother's? what was your mother's name?"

"Her name was Laura Pandolfini," replied the boy, gazing upon the Abbé with a degree of sternness in his look. "Did you know her?"

The face of the Abbé changed from deadly pale to glowing red in a moment; and after a pause he replied angrily and abruptly, "I know her? — I know her? I know a common strumpet?"

The boy's eyes flashed fire; and his hand was in his bosom in a moment seeking the knife that lay there. But he had put the pipe in the breast of his doublet also, and ere he could reach a weapon, which, as we have seen, he was able to use with fatal effect, the form of a lady passing across the two open doors on the other side of the room made him suddenly pause; and after a moment's thought, he drew back his hand and said, "What you say is false! She deserved not the name you have given her!"

He was turning towards the door, when the Abbé cried "Stay!" and as the boy turned, he put his hand to his head and mused thoughtfully. Then starting suddenly he added, "No, no! It would be discovered! — Come hither, boy!" he added; and taking out his purse he counted out some pieces of gold, to no light amount; and giving

them to the boy, he said, "There, you have lost your master and seem to be poorly off. Take those, and get thee into some reputable employment."

But the boy gave one fierce glance at his countenance, dashed down the gold upon the pavement, and exclaiming, "I will have no liar's money!" quitted the chamber and the house.

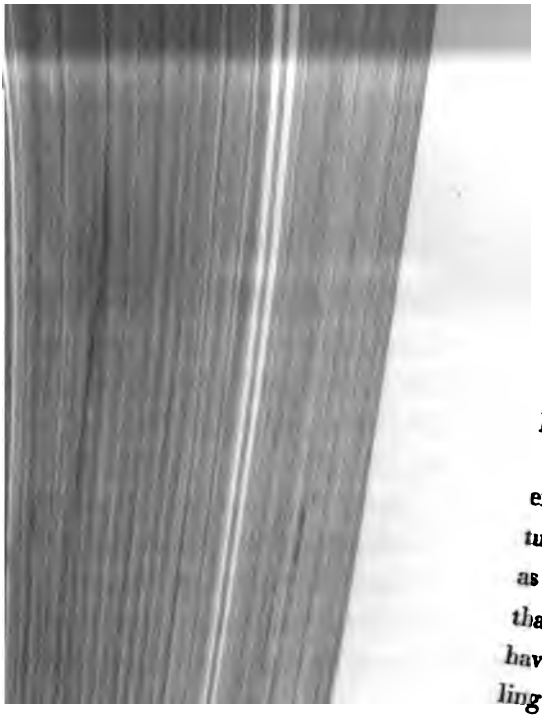
The Abbé gazed after him for a moment or two, fell into deep thought, and ended by pressing his hands over his eyes and exclaiming, "I am a fool!"

After pausing for a few moments more, he said to himself, "Well, I must wait no longer here. This girl seems pleased with my new demeanour towards her. Of my past language which frightened her, it seems that very soon no other impression will remain but the memory of the deep and passionate love I testified. That is never displeasing to any woman; and if I can lead her gently on, the matter will be soon accomplished, now that this her first fancy is at an end, and the

grave has taken the great obstacle out of the way. Love him, she did not, with true, womanly, passionate, love; but fond of him she was, with the sickly fancy of an idle girl; and her grief will be sufficient to soften her proud heart. It is a wonderful softener, grief; and she will cling to whosoever is near her, that has skill and power to soothe and support her. I will teach her to love better than she has loved! — But I must write down these tidings. I must not tell them to her with my own voice, and with her eyes upon me, lest she learn to hate me as the bearer of evil tidings."

And seeking for pen and ink he wrote a note, such as few others but himself could have composed. It was tender, yet respectful, — not lover-like, yet through every word of it love's light was shining — sad, but not gloomy — melancholy, yet with words of hope. When he had done he folded and sealed it, and then listening to the distant village clock, he said —

"If I am absent much longer, Gaspar may suspect; and I am rather inclined to believe that some one has roused suspicions in his mind



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Though the young Marquis spoke quickly, his companion, who knew his character to the very bottom and could instantly see the workings of his mind when he used any of the arts he himself had taught him, perceived at once that Villequier had betrayed the secret of Marie de Clairvaut's abode; and he replied deliberately, "Yes, Gaspar, I have been more successful; and I think now — tamed down as you have been by grief, and requiring some consolation — I think now, I say, that it is not only safe but right, to let you know both that this fair girl is in the neighbourhood of the spot where we now stand, and that she is under my care and guidance."

"In the neighbourhood?" exclaimed Gaspar of Montsoreau. "Under your care and guidance? How happened I not to hear this before, Abbé?"

"Simply," replied the Abbé, "because the state of violence and irritation in which you were when I last returned to you from Blois — the period when I first became possessed of any knowledge on the subject — would have led you

into acts of impetuosity, which, in the first place, would have terribly injured your cause with her; and, in the next, would have discovered the place of her abode to every one from whom we seek to conceal it. Now, however, I think you can command yourself, and you will find the benefit of what has been done to serve you. All I require is, that you would let me know when you visit Mademoiselle de Clairvaut; that you would do so with prudence and caution and forbearance; and though it is not of course necessary that you should desist from pleading your own cause with her, yet let it be as gently as may be."

The Abbé de Boisguerin knew that Gaspar de Montsoreau could not do as he asked him; that it was not in his nature to plead his own cause gently. He felt perfectly confident that the rash impetuosity of the young Marquis would alienate more and more the regard of Marie de Clairvaut, and thus, perhaps, facilitate even his own views and purposes. Could he have prevented it, he would not willingly have let him visit her at all; but it was now

impossible to exclude him; and he knew that the secret of Charles of Montsoreau's death gave him the power of destroying at once all his former pupil's hopes, if he saw that he even made one step in removing the bad impressions Marie previously had received.

On his part, though not quite satisfied with being deceived, Gaspar of Montsoreau believed that the Abbé had deceived him for his own good; and the selfish purposes which were most needful for him to discover, were still concealed in spite of the warnings of Villequier.

CHAP. VII.

In the gardens of the Château by the banl of the Charente; which the Abbé de Boisgueri had left to return to Gaspar de Montsorea and in an arbour which had been constructe as is still ordinary with the people of th country, by a number of vines entwined ov a light trellis work; with a soft and beautif scene before her eyes, and the autumn sunshi gilding the glowing waters, Marie de Clairva sat and wept, with the note from the Abl which had conveyed to her the bitterest tidin she ever had received on earth open in h hand. A day had passed since the even just recorded had taken place, and she h now received the news many hours, but h grief had not in the least subsided; and herself it even seemed greater than it h been at first. Her whole thoughts at first h

been bent upon the one painful fact, that he whom she had loved with all the fervour, and the depth, and the devotion of a heart that had never loved before, was lost to her for ever; that she should never behold again that frank and candid countenance, beaming with looks of deep and indubitable affection; that she should never again see those eyes poring into hers with the intense gaze of love, and seeming at once to give and receive fresh light; that she should never hear the tones of that musical voice, which had so often assured her of protection and support; that she should never cling to that arm, which had so often brought her rescue and deliverance in the moment of danger. Then, she had felt only that he was lost and gone, cut off in the brightness of his days, in the glory and strength of his youth, in the full blossom of his hopes, and ere he had yet more than lifted to his lips the cup, which, offered to him by honour, virtue, and sincerity, ought to have been a sweet one indeed.

Now, however, there had grown upon her mind feelings indeed more selfish, but which

were the natural consequences of her situation, and connected intimately with the loss of him she loved. A feeling of desolation had come over her — of utter loneliness in all the world. It seemed as if she had never loved or esteemed or clung to any but himself; as if there were no one to protect her, to guide, support, direct, or cheer her upon earth; as if life's youth were over, the fortune of existence spent like a prodigal, the heart's treasury empty, and nothing left for the immortal spirit on this side the grave but penury of every rich and noble feeling, lone solitude and petty cares, and all the dull anxieties of a being without an object.

Desolate, desolate indeed, did she feel: and well too might she feel desolate! for though her grief did some wrong to many who loved her as friends and relations, and would have done much to aid and support her; yet, oh! what is such love and esteem? what is aid and support wrung from the midst of hours devoted to other things, and thoughts and feelings centered upon other objects, when compared with the entire devo-

tion, the pure, single love of an upright, an honourable, and a feeling heart — where the being loved is the great end and object of every thought and every action — where all the feelings of the spirit are hovering by day round that one object, and guarding it like angels through the watches of the night? Oh yes, she was lonely, she was desolate, she was unprotected and unsupported, when she compared the present with the past! Well might she think so; well might she grieve and mourn over her own deprivation, when she wept for him and for his early end!

Some comfort, perhaps, had been indeed afforded her by the change which had taken place in the demeanour of the Abbé de Boisguerin. She could never love him; she could never like him: his society could never even become tolerable to her: but yet it was no slight satisfaction to find that she was no more to hear words which she considered as little less than sacrilegious, or to endure the eager passion in his eye, and hear him dare to talk to her of love. She looked upon him as her gaoler indeed, though he often denied that he had power

to say his own visit would be followed by another, which he feared might, in some degree, importune her.

"The young Marquis of Montsoreau," he added, "will be restrained no longer from seeing you; and you know, Madam, it is impossible for me to prevent him, which I would willingly have done, especially as the view he takes of the recent most lamentable event is not likely to do aught but give you pain."

"Oh, cannot you stay him?" exclaimed Marie de Clairvaut. "Cannot you stay him at this terrible moment, when the very sight of him will be horrible to me?"

"I fear not indeed, Lady," replied the Abbé. "I would have given my right hand to prevent his coming, but he seemed perfectly determined. However, when I return, I will do my best once more, in the hope that he may yet be moved." And after a visit very much shorter than usual, he had taken his leave and departed.

The fair girl he left had gone out into the gardens, as we have seen, once more to weep alone over the sad and painful situation in which she

was placed, and over the dark and irreparable loss which she had sustained; but ere she had gone out, she had taken the only precaution in her power to insure that her solitude would remain inviolate, directing the servants — who acted indeed the part of turnkeys — if the Marquis of Montsoreau applied to see her, to state at once that she was not well enough to receive him, and wished to pass some days alone and in tranquillity.

She wept long and bitterly; but in about an hour after she had gone out, the sound of horses' feet reached her ear, and voices speaking at the gateway made themselves heard. She could distinguish even the tones of the young Marquis, and indistinctly the words of the servant in reply. But Gaspar of Montsoreau was hurt and offended by the message she had left, and a certain inclination to tyranny in his disposition broke forth with his usual impetuosity.

"Inform Mademoiselle de Clairvaut," he said, "who it is that desires to see her, and let me have an answer quick. Say that I much wish for a few minutes' conversation with her.

What, fellow! Would you shut the gates upon me like a horseboy? Get ye gone and return quickly. I will walk in the gardens till you come back." And striding in he threw the gate violently to, and advanced directly to the water's side, as if he could have divined that the object of his search was there.

Marie de Clairvaut was indignant, and that feeling for a moment enabled her to throw off the overwhelming load of grief. Rising at once she came forth, and crossed the green slope towards the château, passing directly by Gaspar of Montsoreau as she did so, and intending merely to bow her head by way of salutation. He placed himself in such a manner, however, that she could not pass on, although he must have seen the tears fresh upon her cheeks, and her indignation was more roused than before.

"I directed the servant, sir," she said, when forced to pause, "to inform you, if you came, that I was not well enough to see you; and that I wished for solitude and tranquillity."

"Nay, indeed, dear Lady," said the young Marquis, conquering the feelings of anger with

which he had entered, and speaking with a calm and tender tone, "I thought, if you knew that I was here, pity, if nothing else, would induce you to see, but for a few moments, one who has languished for weeks and months for a single glance of your eyes—one who so deeply, so tenderly, so devotedly, loves you."

Those words sounded harsh, painful, and insulting to the ears of Marie de Clairvaut—words which, from the lips of him she loved, would have been all joy and sweetness, but were now abhorrent to her ear; and looking at him sternly, with her bright eye no longer dimmed, though her lip quivered, she said, "Never let me hear such words again, sir!—I beg that you would let me pass!—Marquis of Montsoreau, this is cruel and ungentlemanly! Learn that I look upon myself as your brother's widow, and ever shall so look upon myself till my dying day." And thus saying she passed him, and entered the house.

She listened eagerly for the sound of horse feet after she had entered her own apartment, and was very soon satisfied that the young

Marquis had gone back. As soon as she was assured of this, she once more went out into the open grounds — for the load of grief ever makes the air of human dwellings feel oppressive; and again going down to the bank of the river, she gazed upon its tranquil current as she walked by the side; and though her sorrow certainly found no relief, yet the sight of the waters flowing beneath her eyes, calm, tranquil, incessant, led, as it were, her thoughts along with them. They became less agitated, though still as deep and powerful; they seemed to imitate the course of the river, running on incessantly in the same dark stream, but in quiet and in silence. The tears indeed would, from time to time, rise into her eyes and roll over her cheeks, but no sob accompanied them; and though a sigh often broke from her lip, it was the sigh of deep, calm despair, not of struggling pain.

It is wonderful how, when we are in deep grief, the ordinary sounds and sights of joyous nature strike harsh and inharmonious upon us. Things that would pass by unheard at other

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The memory of the first time that it had met her ear was sweet and delightful; but the memory of the second time was as the memory of hope; and, in despite of all, it woke again the feelings it had awakened before; and an indistinct feeling of glad expectation came across her mind, like a golden sunbeam, shining through the mist of an autumnal morning. What was it she hoped? what was it she expected? She knew not herself; but still there was an indistinct brightening came over her heart, and feelings; and when the air was over, instead of flying from the music, she listened eagerly for its renewal.

The pipe, however, sounded not again; but in a moment after she heard some one say, "Hark!" and the sweetest possible voice began to sing: —

SONG.

Weep not, Lady, weep not,
Grief shall pass away;
Angels' eyes that sleep not
Watch thee on thy way.

Heavenly hands are twining
Garlands of glad flowers.
Joy and Hope combining
Wreath thy future hours.

Diff'rent powers are near thee —
Bright Hope, dark Despair;
Let the Goddess cheer thee —
Fly the Fiend of Care.

Son of Sin and Sorrow
Despair by earth was given;
Child of the bright to-morrow,
Hope was born of Heaven.

What could it mean? Marie de Clairva asked herself. The words seemed directly a dressed to her, and applicable to her own sit ation: yet the voice, as far as she could jud she had never heard before. But still eve note, every word, appeared to counsel ho "Can I have been deceived?" she thoug "Can the Abbé de Boisguerin and Gaspar Montsoreau have combined for their own da purposes to cheat me, to induce me to belie that the one I love so well is dead?"

But, alas no! The Abbé had left, inclos in his own, the brief note which he had r ceived from Paris, announcing the event, a

that note bore every appearance of being an ordinary matter of business, passing regularly through the post-office of the capital. Could the song that she had heard, she asked herself, again — could it have been accidental; could it have been sung at that moment through one of those strange combinations, which sometimes arise out of entirely indifferent circumstances, to give zest to our joy, or poignancy to our sorrow? She determined, if possible, to ascertain; and raising her voice a little above its ordinary tone, she said, "Who is there? To whom do you sing?"

She did not seem to have made herself heard, however, for a moment after the same voice demanded, "Is there any one that listens?"

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed, eagerly, "I listen; speak on!"

"Well then, hearken," said the voice, and again a new air and a new song began.

SONG.

He goes away to a far distant land,
With cross on his shoulder and lance in his hand;
And news soon comes how his lightning brand
Has scattered the hosts of paninrie.

His beautiful Lady sits weeping and lone,
And wishes she were where her Knight has gone;
But she grieves not his absence with angry moan,
For her spirit is full of his chivalry.

But what are the tidings come next to her ear?
Oh! tidings dark and heavy to hear;
How her fearless warrior, her husband dear,
Has fallen 'neath the lance of the Moslems.
How, gallantly staking his life, to save
From infidel hands, the Redeemer's grave,
He has fought for the righteous and sleeps with the brave,
'Neath the walls of Hierosolima!

'Tis true, oh, 'tis true! — yet she will not believe,
"Ah, no! e'en in dying he would not deceive;
"And he promised, if spirit such power could receive,
"And he fell in his holy chivalry.
"To visit my side in the watches of night,
"To comfort my heart, and to gladden my sight,
"And call me to join him in countries of light,
"And dwell in his breast through eternity."

Years pass; and he comes not. Nor yet she believes!
'Tis his absence, but 'tis not his death that she grieves.
Hope strong in affection, her heart still deceives,
Lo! she watches yon Palmer how eagerly,
To ask him some tidings of Syria to say —
But what is thy magic, oh, thou Palmer gray?
She is clasped in his arms! she has fainted away!
And he kisses her fair cheek how tenderly.

As the song had gone on, Marie de Clairvaut could no longer doubt that, though allego-

rical, those words were applicable to herself. Joy — joy beyond all conception took the place of grief; all that she had suffered, all that she had endured in the past, she now felt, indeed, to be nothing to what she had lately undergone. But the extatic delight which the last words of that song gave, the sudden dissipation of grief was too much for her to endure. It was like the light that blinds us when we suddenly rush from the darkness into the sunshine; and she who had gone through dangers, and horrors, and perils of many a kind, firm and unshaken, fell fainting under the sudden effect of joy. How long she remained so she knew not; but at all events it was not long enough to attract the attention of the people of the house, from the windows, of which she was screened by a thick alley of trees. Some one, however, had been near her, for there were the prints of small feet in the grass, extending from the wall to the spot where she lay, and immediately under her hand was placed a small packet addressed to herself.

Fearful of discovery, she hid it instantly in

her bosom, and, as soon as she could, rose, and with a step far slower than her wishes, sped back again to the house to read the paper she had received, in secret.

It was written in a bold, free hand; the date was that very morning; and the first words, "My beloved."

Marie de Clairvaut laid the letter down and gasped for breath. It was sufficient, it was altogether sufficient; every doubt, every fear that had remained was now at an end, and she once more burst into tears; but, oh, how sweet were those tears! how happy! how unlike the past! Soon she took up the letter again, and through the dazzling drops that still hung in her eyes read the bright assurance, that he lived for her who loved him.

"I have feared," the letter said, "I have feared, that a report of my death which has been current in this city of Paris should have reached my beloved Marie, and the more especially as, by the counsel and earnest entreaty of the Duke of Guise, I have myself contributed to the spread of the rumour, and have taken every means to

suffer it to be confirmed. The object of this, however, was to deliver you alone by throwing those who so unjustly detain you off their guard; and some days ago I came on into this neighbourhood — where my brother, the Abbé de Boisguerin, and the Duke of Epernon, all are, and to which we have traced Villequier several times — in the confident belief that you were not far distant from Angoulême. It might have been some time ere I discovered your abode, but accident has befriended me, and my page, who bears you this, and undertakes positively to deliver it to you, saw you yesterday morning by a most extraordinary but fortunate chance. I dare not venture near you in the early part of the morning, but ere night has closed in, I will find some means to see and speak with you. As far as possible, dearest Marie, be prepared for any thing that it may be necessary to undertake. I fear that you have already suffered much; but I will not doubt that even the rash and violent men who have dared every crime to withdraw you from those that love you best, have treated you with tenderness and kindness.

I too have suffered much, but far more from knowing that you were at the mercy of those who persecute you while I was lying stretched upon the bed of sickness, than from the very wounds that brought me there. I am now well: I am near you; and that is enough to enable me to say that I am happy, although there may be perils and dangers before us, as we are still in the midst of our adversaries, and must once more attempt to pass through a long track of country with obstacles at every step."

The letter ended with every expression of affection and of love; and again and again Marie de Clairvaut read it and wept, and fell into fits of deep thought, and could scarcely believe that the joyous tidings were true.

She next asked herself what she could do to favour her lover's efforts. The two or three women who had been appointed to wait upon her, as well as the male attendants by whom she was surrounded, were all strangers to her, and she felt that they were her gaolers. There was one of them, however, who had looked upon her during the preceding day with evident

compassion, had watched her tears with sorrowful eyes, and had spoken a few words of consolation. At one time she thought of speaking to that woman, and trying to gain her to her interests for the purpose of facilitating any thing that Charles of Montsoreau might do to effect her liberation. She hesitated, however, and judging that if he succeeded in seeing her that evening it would be by passing over the wall at the spot where she had heard the boy singing in the evening; she lingered about during the whole of the evening, listening for the least sound. None was heard, however, and at length the bell at the gates of the enclosure was heard to ring.

Agitated and anxious, fearing that every moment might bring Charles of Montsoreau to the spot, at the very time that other persons were near, she came out from behind the trees, and walked slowly on by the side of the river. Just at that moment a small boat pushed slowly up the current by a country boy, passed by the spot where she stood; but the boy whistled lightly on his way, as he went, and took no

notice of her; and in a minute after, she heard steps approaching from the other side, and turned with some anxiety to see who it was that approached.

It was the servant girl we have before mentioned, who came towards her quickly, saying, "You have been very sad these two days, lady, and I wish you would take comfort. Here is a good man, one of the preaching friars just called at the gate, and I 'm sure, if you would but listen to him, he would give you consolation."

"Oh no," replied Marie de Clairvaut, "he could give me no consolation, my good girl. My own thoughts just now are my best companions."

As she spoke, however, to her dismay, she saw the monk coming across the green from the side of the gates, and she determined at once to reject all his proffered advice and consolation, fearing that the precious minute for seeing him she loved might be lost by this unwonted intrusion.

"Do listen to him, dear lady," said the girl

"When I told him how sad you were, he said he was sure that he could give you comfort."

In the mean time the friar approached with a slow step, with his cowl drawn over his head, and his hand supported by his staff. Marie de Clairvaut trembled from anxiety and apprehension, and only returned the friar's benedicite by an inclination of the head and an assurance that she did not stand in need of the consolation he offered.

"Yet listen to me, daughter," he said, without withdrawing the cowl from his head. But the first tones of that full rich voice proved sufficient nearly to overpower the fair girl to whom he spoke. "If you will hear me but for five minutes, my daughter," he said, "I think and I believe, that I can suggest to you consolations that you may take to heart; and if not, the few words I have to speak can do you no harm at least."

Marie de Clairvaut bowed her head, and took a step or two nearer to the water, while the woman withdrew for a short space, so as to be out of ear shot. But still she remained watching

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thence may be longer, it will be more secure. Can you be here at that hour?"

"I can," she said, "and will, and, oh! may God grant, Charles, that this time we may not only come within sight of the haven, as we have twice done before, but reach it altogether; and never, never again will I suffer them to separate me from you, as I did on that awful day in Paris."

"Even yet, neither I nor the Duke know how it happened," said Charles of Montsoreau.

"As I was following the Queen," replied Marie, rapidly, "some one pulled me by the sleeve, and on turning to see who it was, the crowd closed in between me and Catherine. The person who had touched me was dressed in the colours of the house of Guise, and he said, 'The Duke expects you Mademoiselle. If you will come round this way, I will lead you to the other gate where there is no crowd.' I followed willingly, and nothing doubting; and he led me round into one of the streets behind, when suddenly I was seized by the arms on either side, and hurried along without the power of resist-

ance. I cried for help as loud as I could, indeed, but they bore me rapidly into the house opposite, where I saw the Abbé de Boisguerin, and could hear your brother's voice talking to Monsieur de Villequier. They then put me into a chair, the blinds of which I could not undraw, and carried me rapidly to another house, where I remained for some time, till Villequier and the rest again appeared. I did all that woman could do, Charles, to make them set me free; but what could I do? what means had I to use? — entreaties, to which they were deaf; menaces, at which they laughed. Your brother, indeed, said something that he intended for kindness, and the Abbé looked gloomy and sad. But Villequier only smiled for all answer; till at length tidings were brought them that they were discovered, and that people were coming rapidly in pursuit of them. I was then once more borne away by Villequier, after a few words between him and your brother; and I heard your brother say as they parted, 'I will delay them as long as possible.' Where they took me I know not well, but I believe it was

the Hôtel de Villequier.—But see, the woman is coming near! We must part, dear Charles; I fear we must once more part."

Nothing more could be said, for the girl now approached; and Charles of Montsoreau, assuming the tone of the friar, bade Marie remember his words, and take them to heart; and then, giving her his blessing, departed.

Shortly before midnight, wrapt in a cloak of a dark colour, in order, as far as possible, to pass unobserved if any eye should be watching, Marie de Clairvaut passed through one of the lower windows of the château, and with a light step, sprang into the little cloister that ran along one side of the building, at no great depth from the window. The moon was shining bright and full, and every object around, except where the shadow of the cloister fell, was as clear as if the sun had been in the sky.

She paused and listened with a beating heart. There was no sound but the murmur of the quick Charente; and then, putting her ear to the open window, she listened there to ascertain that all was quiet in the house. Nothing

stirred; and, knowing how important it was t leave no trace of the manner in which her fligh had been effected, she closed the casement carefully, and prepared to go forth into the moonlight.

There was something, however, in the stillness, and the clearness, and the calmness of every thing that was in itself fearful; and she hesitated for a moment before she went out. At length, however, she ventured across the green and shining turf, and with a quick step approached the edge of the water. Looking down upon it from above, she could see nothing in the deep shadow of the bank; but, suddenly, a bright ripple caught some stray rays of moonlight, and chequered the dark bosom of the water with quick lines of silver.

"Are you there?" said the voice of Charles of Montsoreau from below.

"Yes," she said. "How shall I descend?"

But, even as she spoke, a figure glided out from the shrubs beside her, and, uttering a low cry, Marie de Clairvaut perceived the girl who had given admittance to the supposed

friar on the preceding evening. The sound which she had uttered had instantly caught the attention of Charles of Montsoreau; and, springing up the bank, he found the girl with her hand clasped round the Lady's wrist, but holding up the other hand as if enjoining silence.

"You are unkind," said the girl, in a low tone, "when I was kind to you. I have already been bitterly reproached for letting in the monk; and now, if you fly, what will become of me? They will say that I did it."

"Fear not, fear not!" answered Charles of Montsoreau, "and attempt not to detain the Lady, my good girl; for go she must and will; and, as there is no other boat here, any attempt to pursue us will be vain. All you can do by endeavouring to detain her will be useless, and but injure yourself. Here is money for you," he continued.

The girl put it away with her hand, replying, "I want no money, sir; but if she goes, I will go with her. I will not stay here in the power of that dark Abbé. I will come with her if she will let me."

"Willingly, willi
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"Fear not," repl
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passed so sorrowfully
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man who had been w
boat away from the
the stern guided it in
water. There were
any one.

"You are sure, Ignati," said the young Count, "that you marked every rock and shoal as you came up?"

"Quite sure," replied the boy; and, leaving the current, which was rapid and powerful, to bear them on, without disturbing its smooth surface by the splash of oars, they glided along quickly down the stream: now in moonlight, now in shade, with the high rocky banks and promontories filled with holes and caverns, which border the valley of the Charente, now seen in bright clear light — now rising up against the silvery sky wrapped in deep shadows and obscurity.

The hand of Marie de Clairvaut lay clasped in that of her lover as they sat side by side. Their hearts were full, though their lips were silent; and the eyes of both were raised towards the sky, filled with thankfulness, and hope, and trust. Thus they went on for about two hours, saying but little, and that little in low and murmured tones; but as they went, Charles of Montsoreau found occasion to tell her that he had luckily effected a new arrangement, and

that he had procured means of landing and proceeding on their journey before they reached Jarnac.

At length, after a voyage of about two hours and a half, as the moon was beginning to decline, a rushing sound was heard over the bow of the boat, and the waters of the river were seen fretting against a dyke, which had been built to confine it in its proper course. A couple of houses, sheltered by two sloping hills which swept down to the very bank of the river, appeared upon the left hand, with what seemed a number of living objects gathered about them.

Marie de Clairvaut turned her eyes to Charles of Montsoreau with some apprehension, but he pressed her hand tenderly, saying, "Fear not, fear not. They are my own people, waiting for our arrival."

The boy guided the boat safely up to the landing place, and the question, "Who comes here?" was demanded, as if at a regular warlike post.

"A friend," replied Charles of Montsoreau,

and gave the word Château Thierry. The man grounded his arms, and Charles of Montsoreau, springing to the shore, led Marie de Clairvaut and the girl who had followed her, to one of the houses, where every thing seemed prepared for their reception.

He paused for a moment to gaze upon the face of the girl who had accompanied them, and to ask her name, which he found to be Louise. The countenance was good, and frank, and gentle, and the natural spirit of physiognomy, which is in every one's brain, gave a pleasant reading of that face.

"Listen to me," he said, speaking to her. "As you have preferred the service of this lady to remaining behind where I found you, depend upon it every attention and devotion that you show to her by the way will be taken note of and well rewarded; and do not forget, that, if possible, you are never to leave her, but to do every thing in your power, under all circumstances, to enable her to reach the Duke of Guise, who is her near relation, and whom we expect to find at Blois or Chartres."

"Is she so great a lady?" said the girl.

"She is the niece and ward of the great Duke of Guise," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "and the time is rapidly coming when those who have injured and offended her will be severely punished, and those who have assisted and befriended her rewarded far beyond their expectations."

Having said this, he left them to see that all was properly prepared; and in a few minutes more Marie de Clairvaut, with the girl who accompanied her, were placed in one of the rude but roomy chaises of the country, and with six horses to drag it through the heavy roads, was rolling away in the direction of Limoges, followed by Charles of Montsoreau, and a party of five or six servants on horseback.

CHAP. VIII.

THE autumn was far spent, an early winter had set intensely in, frost once more covered the ground, the last leaves had fallen from the trees, and looking round upon the thick tapestry that covered the walls, and the immense logs of wood which blazed in the deep arched fire-place, the tenant of a splendid room in the old château of Blois smiled when he thought of where he had last passed a similar frosty day: in arms in the open field against the enemies of the land.

Now, however, the appearance of Henry Duke of Guise was in some degree different from that which it had ever been before. Loaded with honours by the King, adored by the people, gratified in every demand, ruling almost despotically the state, the height to which he had risen had impressed itself upon his

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around his neck, the
massy gold, and thin
marked the slashings
doublet, where, slightl

with easy dignity, the pure white lining below appeared from time to time. There were no jewels on his hands, but one large signet ring. He wore no hat, and the brown hair curling round his forehead was the only ornament that decked his head. There was a jewel in his belt, indeed, a single jewel of high price, and the pommel of the dagger, which lay across his loins, was a single emerald.

From time to time, while he had been dressing; — indeed we might say almost every minute, some messenger, or page, or courier appeared, bearing him news or letters from the various provinces of the realm. His secretary stood beside him, but every line was read first by the Duke's own eye; and then he handed them to Pericard, either with some brief comment or some direction in regard to the answer to be returned.

"Ha!" he said, smiling, after reading one epistle. "There is a curious letter from good Hubert de Vins. Hubert loves me as his own brother, and yet to read that letter one would think he respected me but little. There is no

bad name he does no
heutre and Huguenot,
Henry, who, he says
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"I think with Mon
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"You mistake, Per
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who stands between hi
who have we hear?"

again opened. "From Provence;"—and taking the letter from the hand of a dusty courier, he read it over attentively and threw it to Pericard, saying, "That is good news surely, Pericard! In the room of the two deputies who were so difficult to manage that we were obliged to stuff them with carp and truffles till they both fell sick and fled, we have got two steady Leaguers not to be shaken by threats or moved by choice meats. If we could dislodge that viper, Epernon, from Angoumois, all would be clear before us till we reached the confines of Henry of Navarre. But Epernon is raising troops, I hear——" he added, although he saw that some one had entered the room and was approaching him.

"Which he will soon disband, Monsieur de Guise," said the stranger, "as I am charged by the King to set out to-morrow morning to give the Duke his commands to that effect."

"By my life, Monsieur Miron," said the Duke, "you will have soon to lay aside altogether the exercise of your esculapean powers,

at least upon his Majesty's person. You show yourself so skilful in healing the wounds of the state, and curing the sickness of the body politic."

"Your Highness is good unto me," replied the King's physician, looking humble; "but I came to pay my respects to your Highness now, not having seen you since the exile of Villeroy, Pinar and the rest. I hope your Highness does not think that their disgrace is likely to affect your interests at court."

"Not in the least, Monsieur Miron, "replied the Duke; "far from it. I seek to exercise no influence amongst the King's ministers. Those who are good for the state are good to me. On the King's good feeling and good sense I firmly rely."

"Some body, "said the physician, "informed his Majesty that you were grieved at the dismissal of Villeroy. I may tell him, then, that such is not the case, for he was pained to hear it."

"Tell him so, I beseech you," replied the Duke. "I know the King would not wish

without some good reason to dismiss any one that I especially esteemed."

"Most assuredly," replied Miron; "but might I give your Highness one slight warning as a friend, and a most sincere one?"

"Most gratefully will it be received," replied the Duke. "Speak freely, my learned sir," he continued, seeing that the physician had fixed his eyes upon Pericard. "Our good Pericard is as silent as your friend death, Monsieur Miron, who tells no tales you know to those on this side the grave, whatever he may do to those on the other. What is it you have to say?"

"It is this, my Lord," replied Miron. "I should tell you first, that I do believe the King sincerely loves you, and that if you deal but politicly with his humours, there is none in whom he will place such confidence. But my good lord the King's temperament is a strange one. — I speak as a physician. It is indeed injured by some excesses, but though by nature full of the mercurial character, there was always much of the saturnine in it. The balance be-

tween these has been overthrown by many circumstances, and in certain conjunctions of the planets he is strangely and variably affected. Such also is the case in the time of these hard frosts. In soft and genial weather he may be easily dealt with: you will then find him but as a thing of wax in your hands. But I beseech you, my Lord, remember that, when the pores of the earth are shut up and filled with this black and acrid frost, 't is then that all the humours of the body are likewise congealed, and Henry is at that time filled with black and terrible vapours, which are dangerous not alone to himself, but to every one who approaches him unprepared. I say it advisedly, my good Lord. Any one who urges the King far, at such moments, is in peril of his life.* But I must say no more, for here comes a messenger."

"I thank you most sincerely," replied the

* Such, and in such terms, strange and fantastic as they may seem, was undoubtedly the warning given by the physician Miron to the Duke of Guise not many days before the catastrophe of Blois.

Duke. "Who is this packet from? I must speedily descend to supper."

"From his Highness of Mayenne," replied the messenger. "He said it was matter of life and death, and commanded me to ride post haste."

"Ha!" said Guise, as he opened the packets and saw the contents. "Our cousin of Savoy in arms in France. This shows the need of unanimity amongst ourselves. He shall find himself mistaken, however, if he thinks Guise will forget his duty to his country. Write Charles of Mayenne word, Pericard, to bring his troops into such a position that they can act against Savoy at a moment's notice, and tell him that he shall have orders to do so ere three days be over. Send, too, to Rouen, thanking them for their attachment; and see that our agent at the court of Rome have full instructions regarding the Count de Soissons. Ha! here comes our brother of the church. My good Lord Cardinal, we will descend together. We shall scarcely reach the hall before the King arrives."

The person who entered bore a strong family likeness to the Duke, but was neither so tall nor so powerful in person. He was dressed in the crimson robes of a prince of the church of Rome; and his countenance, which had much shrewdness and some dignity, accorded well with his station. Miron had retired quietly while the Duke spoke; a sign had dismissed the messenger from the Duke of Mayenne, and none but Pericard remained in the room. But yet the Cardinal spoke in a whisper to his brother, who merely smiled, replying, "Come, come; we have no time now to jest." And thus saying, he led the way down to a hall, where supper was prepared at the table of the Grand Master for all the most distinguished guests then resident at Blois.

The table was covered, as was then much the custom, with jewelled plate of many kinds, and various fanciful devices. The room was in a blaze of light, and all the guests, but the King and his particular train, had already arrived. They were standing back from the table, and

gathered together in the magnificent dresses of that period, formed splendid groups in different parts of the chamber, while sewers and other attendants, hurrying backwards and forwards, brought in the various dishes, and set them in their regular order.

The appearance of the Duke and his brother, the Cardinal de Guise, occasioned an instant movement amongst the guests, and the proudest there bowed lowly to the gallant Prince, whose fortunes hitherto had gone on from height to height. Nobles and generals of the highest distinction eagerly sought a word with him, and bishops and prelates of many a various character crowded forward, but to touch the hand of one who had stood forth so prominently in defence of the church.

In a few minutes the table was covered with the various dishes, and intimation that supper was served was immediately given to the King, who appeared the moment after, while the Duke of Guise advanced to the door to receive him, and with every testimony of lowly respect led him to the raised seat appointed for him. The

King was followed by six gentlemen, for whos places had been reserved, and amongst thei the eye of Guise rested upon Villequier. Tha eye flashed for a single moment as it saw him but the next instant all was calm, and th Duke noticed him especially by an inclinatio of the head.

As soon as the King had taken his seat, say ing, "Sit, my Lord Duke, I pray you; stan upon no further ceremonies," Guise and th rest seated themselves at the table, and th monarch and his princely officer bent forward t say some complimentary nothing to each othe each at the same time unfolding the napkin tha lay before them. As they did so, from th napkin of the Duke of Guise fell out upon hi plate a folded letter; and Henry, who was a gaiety and condescension at that moment, ex claimed aloud with a light laugh, "Some lette from his lady-love, upon my honour. Read, read my Lord Duke! Read, read! Carvers, touc not a dish till the Duke has read."

The Duke opened the letter smiling, whil the King bent a little towards that side, as i

jestingly, to see the contents. All eyes round the table were fixed upon those two; and it was seen that the colour mounted into the cheek of the Duke of Guise, that his brow gathered into a frown, and his lip curled with a scornful smile. As far as the paint on the King's countenance would admit, he appeared to turn pale at the same moment. But Guise, crushing the letter together in his hand, threw it contemptuously under the table, saying aloud, "They dare not!" *

None but the King around the table knew to what those words alluded: but Henry had seen the words, "Beware, Duke of Guise, your life is in danger every day. There are those round you from morning to night, who are ready to spill your blood."

The Duke seemed to forget the matter in a moment, and by the graces of his demeanour soon caused it to be forgotten also by all those around. Henry resumed his gaiety and tran-

* Some of the Duke's historians say, that he did not speak the words aloud, but merely wrote at the bottom of the note, "On n'oseroit," and then threw it under the table.

quility: wine and feasting did their part; and some short time after the King, with his glass filled with the most exquisite wine of France, exclaimed, "Let us drink to some one, my Lord Duke. To whom shall it be?"

"It is for your Majesty to command," replied the Duke gaily. "Let us drink to our good friends the Huguenots."

"Willingly, willingly," cried Henry laughing. "To the Huguenots, cousin of Guise: to all our good subjects, in short: let us not forget them."

The King smiled, and many around smiled also at what they thought would be a mortification to the Duke. But Guise answered immediately, after drinking the toast, "It is well bethought of your Majesty, while you give us the health of your bitter enemies, to give us that of your most faithful servants, who will never cease to defend you against them."

He spoke with such an air of good humour, that none could see in it but what any courtier might; and this matter was also forgotten in a few moments. Shortly before the dessert was

placed upon the table, a page slipped a small scrap of paper with a few words written upon it into the hands of the Duke, who gathered the meaning at a single glance, while his whole countenance brightened with satisfaction. "Come, Monsieur de Villequier," he said, "honour me by drinking with me to a mutual relation of ours. Here is to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, as sweet, as good, as fair a lady as any in France. Let us drink her health, and a gallant husband to her soon."

"Willingly, willingly, my Lord," replied Villequier; "and I wish your Lordship would let me name that husband. But here is to her health." And he drank the wine.

"Nay," answered Guise, "that cannot be, Monsieur de Villequier, for I have named him myself already."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Villequier, with no slight surprise in his look. But he instantly overcame the first emotion, adding, "I suppose, then, that the young Lady is under your protection at the present moment?"

"At which you can neither be displeased nor

surprised, Monsieur de Villequier," replied th Duke, still bearing a courteous and affable look "As you know you swore upon the mass som weeks ago that she was not under your protec tion, and that you knew not where she was, it must be a relief to your mind to find that she is well cared for."

"Oh, my good Lord of Guise," replied Villequier in the same courteous tone, "no one ever doubts that his Highness of Guise cares for every one that comes within his influence. Have we not an instance of it here, when no sooner is one of the good Duke's friends, and the allotted husband of his fair niece, dead, than another of his friends is raised to the same happy prospect. But, pray, may I ask if the young Lady herself is well pleased with this rapid substitution of lovers?"

"Delighted, I believe," replied the Duke with a smile full of meaning. "Though I have had no particular communication with her yet, inasmuch as, it having been discovered that she had escaped from the hands of some base persons who unjustly detained her, the worthy and

respectable governor of Angoumois took pains to guard the country all round, in order to stop her on her journey to Blois. This has much delayed her coming, and would most likely have delayed it still longer, had she not taken refuge with Monsieur and Madame Montmorin, till I sent a force sufficient to open the way for her through all the La Valettes in France. It is thus only this night — nay, this very moment, that I hear of her arrival in Blois."

"Well, my Lord," answered Villequier with a laugh, "it is evident that he who attempts to strive with the Duke of Guise, either in stratagem or in force, must be a bold man, and should be a clever one. As I told your Highness, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut was not in my hands, but how she was set free from the hands in which she was placed must remain a mystery rather difficult to solve. A servant girl, it seems, became the immediate instrument; but the skill with which every trace of her path was concealed, and even the manner in which her flight itself was effected, bespeaks a better brain than that of a peasant of Angoumois. Is it permitted, my

Lord, to ask the name of the favoured gentle
you destine for her husband?"

"His Majesty receives his Court to-nigh
think," replied the Duke, "and then, Monsi
de Villequier, I shall have much pleasure
presenting that gentleman to you. But, M
sieur de Villequier, if, as your words imply,
have suffered yourself to be out-manœuvere
this business, I will mortify your pride in y
own skill by telling you that you have b
foiled and frustrated by no efforts of mine,
by the wit of a girl and the courage and str
gem of a mere youth. My Lord the King,
I humbly beseech your Majesty to let us d
better policy to Monsieur de Villequier."

Henry laughed lightly and drank the wi
and the rest of the supper passed off g
though Villequier from time to time fell
a momentary fit of thought, from which
was twice roused to find the eye of the Duk
Guise upon him. At length, as the hour
the reception of the Court in the King's
apartments approached, Henry rose and reti

followed by Villequier and the rest of the gentlemen who had accompanied him.

The Duke of Guise paused for a moment after, speaking rapidly to several of those around him; and then, calling a page, he whispered to him, "Go with speed to Monsieur Chapelle Marteau. Tell him to let me see him at midnight. I should also like to see Monsieur de Magnac, one of the Presidents of the Nobles. You will very likely find him in his cabinet at the Palais de Justice. I would fain see them both. — Gentlemen, the King will soon be in the hall, where you had better meet his Majesty. I must be absent for a few moments, and you will therefore pardon me."

Thus saying the Duke left them, and followed by one or two attendants, proceeded to the apartments assigned especially to himself.

In the mean while the rest of the nobles hurried from the château to various parts of the town, in order to accompany their wives and daughters to a great assembly of the Court, which was to be held that night in the grand hall of the castle. In the same hall the meetings of the States-General

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three orders assembled
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reception of the Court
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by a long and brillian
corated with the colla
first orders in Europe
and advanced towards t
peared the lovely form
leaning on his left arm
that splendour to whic

lent itself, appeared upon his right the young Count of Logères, somewhat thinner and somewhat paler than he had been when he before presented himself at the Court of France, but with his head high, and proud with the best kind of pride, the consciousness of rectitude, and his eye bright with the excitement of the moment and the scene. The eyes of Marie de Clairvaut were bent down, and there was a slight but not ungraceful embarrassment in her manner, from the consciousness that many late events which had befallen her would attract more than usual attention to herself.

Advancing straight towards the King and Queen, the Duke of Guise took Marie's hand in his, saying, "Allow me to present to your Majesties my dear niece and ward, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and permit me also to present to you my friend ——;" and he laid particular emphasis on the word, "the Count of Logères, whom, with your Majesty's permission, and this fair Lady's consent, I destine to be her husband. Were it possible to give him a higher treasure than herself, I should be bound

to do it, as if it had not been for him, ar
his skill, courage, and determination on
occasions, my head would have been now i
dust, and I should not now have had the
of serving your Majesty well, faithfully,
successfully, as I trust to do."

From his first entrance, and while he sp
a low murmur had run through the whole C
some inquiring who the gentleman was tha
companied him, the few who knew Charl
Montsoreau whispering his name, and all,
passed round, expressing their surprise a
re-appearance of one supposed to be dead.
Duke of Guise in the mean time turne
Villequier, who had at first become pale a
sight of Charles of Montsoreau.

"Monsieur de Villequier," said the D
"you were desirous of knowing the nam
the friend for whom I destine my niece. A
me to present him to you in the perso
the Count of Logères, whom I trust you
soon congratulate upon their marriage."
while he spoke he ran the finger of his
hand gently down his baldric towards the

of his sword, with a gesture significant enough, but which could only be seen by Villequier.

Having said this, the Duke and his party retired to a space left for them on the King's right hand, and the various entertainments of the evening commenced, the King, who had been rather amused than otherwise at the re-appearance of Charles of Montsoreau, giving himself up to one of those bursts of gaiety, which occasionally ran into somewhat frantic excesses.

We cannot pause here to describe the scene. All was splendour and amusement; and in the light Court of France the circumstances in which Marie de Clairvaut was placed were sufficient to draw around her all the gay, and the gallant, and the idle. Unaccustomed to such scenes—less accustomed, indeed, than even she was — the eye of Charles of Montsoreau turned towards her from time to time, with perhaps some anxiety, to see how she would bear the homage that was paid to her; whether, in short, it would be the same Marie de Clairvaut in the midst of flattery and adulation and that bright

and glittering scene,
in the calm quiet of
one solitary journey,
peril, danger, and dis
that way, however, h
retiring demeanour ;
found her eyes seekin
part of the hall, an
bright smile as soon
felt, and he felt pr
there present who c
dian's choice was her

With the irregul
Henry's conduct at t
for half an hour wi
utmost enjoyment, t
sombre and gloomy;
knitting his brow for
quitted the hall. Al
fusion of departure, a
made his way across t
was seen standing, t
The young Count h
course of the evening

ing long and eagerly with a lady of extraordinary beauty, who stood at some distance from the royal party; and he had heard her named as the Marchioness of Noirmontier, with a light jest from more than one tongue at her intimacy with the Duke. When he now reached the side of that Prince she had passed on, and was bending over Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and speaking to her with a look of tenderness and admiration.

"Come on Count, come on," said the Duke, in a low but somewhat sharp tone, as soon as his young friend joined him. And they advanced to the side of the two ladies at the moment that Madame de Noirmontier was urging Marie to spend a few days with her at her beautiful château some way down the Loire. The Duke, however, did not suffer his ward to reply.

"I fear, dear Madam," he said in a decided and somewhat stern tone, "that it cannot be."

The colour rushed violently up into the cheeks of Madame de Noirmontier, and the tears seemed ready to spring into her eyes. But the Duke added, "Logères, escort Marie back to my

apartments. If you will permit me, Madam
will be your attendant to your carriage,
explain why my young ward cannot have
extreme pleasure and honour you intended
her."

"It needs no explanation, your Highne
replied the Marchioness, raising her he
proudly. I intended to have staid some d
longer in this neighbourhood; but as she can
come to me, I shall return at once to Paris."

The Duke looked mortified, but still offe
her his hand; and when he rejoined his
party in the apartments assigned to him, he
somewhat gloomy and abstracted.

CHAP. IX.

"His Highness, Sire," said one of the attendants to Henry III. on the following day, "His Highness of Guise is not to be found this morning. His servants say that he has gone forth on horseback, followed only by two grooms: but whither he has turned his steps, no one seems rightly to know."

"Seek him with Madame de Noirmontier," said Villequier, who stood beside the King.

But Henry, however, who was in no mood for jesting at that moment, replied sharply, "He is playing with me! He is playing with me! He mocks me! He will repent it some day! And I think you mock me too, Villequier, to talk of Madame de Noirmontier at this moment. Have you not heard this business of Savoy? He knew it last night, and said nothing of it; and I'll tell you what more he has done,

Villequier, which you may like as little as I li
the other. He has fixed the day for the ma
riage of his niece with that bold young Logèr
But this business of Savoy is terrible, and the
mutinous States will be the ruin of the realm.'

"Sire," replied Villequier, "your Majes
must remember that I am somewhat in darknes
in twilight at least. I have heard a rumo
that the Savoyard is in arms in France. B
what of the States?"

"Why, they are even now discussing," exclaime
the King, "whether there shall be war or nc
even to defend our invaded territory. The
are the Clergy now arguing it at the Jacobi
the Nobles in the Palais de Justice, and the Thi
Estate in the Hôtel de Ville, — all, all showi
a disposition to hesitate at such a moment; a
Guise, the Generalissimo of my armies, a
Grand Master of my household absent, Heav
knows where!"

"The devil knows best, most likely," repli
Villequier with a calm smile. "But, perha
the secret may be, that the Duke of Savoy
son-in-law of the King of Spain. Now, t

King of Spain has been a good friend to the Duke of Guise, and the good Pope used always to say that a Guise never jumped higher than the King of Spain liked."

"By my faith!" replied the King, "I sometimes think that this same gloomy Philip is more sovereign in France than the King thereof. But here come tidings from the Tiers Etats. Come, Monsieur Artau, how have gone the deliberations of the States? What say our good Commons to war with Savoy?"

"They go against it altogether, Sire," replied the officer who now entered. "Chapelle Marteau spoke against it vehemently, declared that it was but a plundering excursion of some light troops, who had carried off a few thousand crowns, while it would cost many millions to carry on a war with Savoy: and then, up got another, and talked of imposts and taxes and the poverty of the state, and said that millions and hundreds of millions had been lost in peculation and extravagance. If your Majesty indeed, he said, would bear two-thirds of the expense out of your domain, and would

cut down your tall trees, or mortgage a part (the royal forests, the Commons would see wh could be done."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Henry stampin his foot, "when they keep me here, a throne beggar, without a crown in my pocket, to give jewel to a mistress or a friend, they expect m to carry on the defence of the country at m own expense! On my soul! I have a grea mind to cast away the sceptre, to go down int the ranks of a private gentleman, and name m rule-loving mother to govern in my stead: o faith, I care not if it were Guise himself. H would teach these surly citizens what it is t have an iron rod over their heads. By the Lord he would not spare the backs of the porker Hie thee, good Artau to the Clergy at the Ja cobins; see what they say to the matte And what say you, Villequier, to my scheme o abdicating?"

"Why, Sire," replied Villequier calmly, " think it is an excellent good one. But I hope, i the first place, that you will give a few thoughts t what I told you concerning the young Marquis d

Montsoreau and the hundred thousand crowns he promised on the day of his marriage with Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. You know your Majesty has claimed the lion's share; and seventy-five thousand crowns at the present moment, or any time between this and Christmas, might serve to give your Majesty a new lace to your doublet, or a new doublet to your lace, for to my mind both are plaguy rusty. Now, though the re-appearance of this young Count of Logères will cut down the amount of his brother's estates most terribly, yet that affects me more than you, Sire; and by having made inquiries I find, to a certainty, that he is quite capable of paying the money the moment the marriage is concluded."

"Seventy-five thousand crowns!" repeated the King thoughtfully. "Seventy-five thousand crowns! Why, my friend, I think that neither you or I have heard of such a thing since we had beards. But how does all this square with my giving the crown to Guise, which you approved so highly?"

"Oh, extremely well, Sire," replied Villequier. "The crown I would have you give him

is neither the crown c
would give him an i
will fit him better, de
with a terrestrial one
the skies, and, could
soon find them. Ho
that your royal word
to the young Marqui

A dark smile ca
"We will see, Villeq
"My word must
broken. The morn
Duke has fixed for t
what may happen b
lequier. She is t
failing the Duke of
hesitation or delay, w
compel obedience.
tious, Villequier; we
must neither seem
of the marriage, for
of some concealed de
him strongly, becaus
his guard; and I fear

France could not do me so much good as the Duke of Guise could do me harm if he were offended."

"Without being slain," replied Villequier in a low tone. "Oh no, my Lord, I know well, a wounded boar is always the most dangerous."

The King smiled again in the same dark and sinister manner, but he made no reply to Villequier's insinuation—perhaps still doubtful of his own purposes, perhaps prevented from speaking openly by the return of Monsieur D'Artau.

"What! so soon come back?" exclaimed Henry. "You cannot judge of the tone of the assembly, D'Artau. You should have heard more of their deliberations."

"There was no more to hear, Sire," replied D'Artau. "The Clergy were all agreed; every body had become wonderfully pacific in a moment. There had not been one voice raised for war, and fifty or sixty were raised against it; so their deliberations, as I have said, were almost concluded at the time I entered. They went

to no vote, indeed, up
to pass on to another

"The villains! th
King. "What did t
you hear?"

"Why, they said,
"that they had tax
time, for the purpose
the Huguenots; that
themselves to the ut
would not consent t
thus raised should
upon their fellow Ca
yet been done agai
faith."

"The specious
Henry. "But what
sence of the Duke of

"It was said, Sire,
ple, that he had evid
policy, not wishing t
yet unwilling to go
said, indeed, Sire,"
pelle Marteau had a

the case. But that could not be so either, for the Duke sent for the President of the Tiers Etats last night, without being able to find him. That I know from the servants, so that what Chapelle said must have been out of his own head; while, on the contrary, I hear that Monsieur Magnac and the Count de Brissac, who were with the Duke for more than an hour last night, spoke vehemently against the Duke of Savoy amongst the Nobles at the Palais de Justice. Thus the Nobles were as unanimous for the war, as the other two States were against it."

"That should be the foot-fall of a Guise in the antechamber," said the King. "Who is without there?"

"The Duke of Guise, your Majesty," said a page entering almost as the King spoke, "craves audience for a moment."

"Admit him," said the King; "admit him:" and the next instant the Duke of Guise entered hastily in a riding dress.

"Your Majesty's gracious pardon," he said, "for presenting myself before you thus: but I

heard tidings, as I came along, which I belie
might give you great and exceeding pain."

"Well may it give me pain, cousin
Guise," replied the King. "Well may it g
me pain, to find that my subjects are so
sensible to their own honour or to mine, as
suffer a foreign enemy to encamp upon
native soil, without doing what best we may
drive him forth."

"It may, indeed, Sire," replied the Duke
Guise. "But the matter has not been prope
explained; and neither the Tiers Etats nor
Clergy have seen it in its true light."

"But where was the Duke of Guise to
plain it?" demanded Henry. "Where was
Generalissimo of my armies, the Lieutena
general of my kingdom, the Grand Master
my household, the man whose voice is o
second to my own in France — ay, and
Heavens! whose voice is sometimes first lil
wise? Where was he, I say; and how came
not to be present?"

"From the simplest of all possible caus
Sire," replied the Duke. "The business reg

larly appointed for this morning's discussion by the States was a mere trifling matter of some petty impost. I had not told your Majesty last night of this affair of Savoy, because I thought it would spoil the pleasure of your evening, and perhaps disturb your rest. I myself, however, neglected nothing. I instantly dispatched orders, in your Majesty's name, to my brother of Mayenne, to advance towards Piedmont with troops from Lyons. Before I rested, I sent for the Presidents of the Nobles and of the Tiers Etats. The latter, however, was not to be found; but I told Brissac and Magnac what had occurred, and begged them to prepare all minds for vigorous measures against Savoy, without disclosing the actual fact of aggression, that fact having only reached me by the excessive speed of my brother's courier. I felt perfectly certain that the news could not be known till to-night or to-morrow morning; and how it happened that your Majesty was informed of it so early, as to send down a message thereon to each of the three Estates, I really do not know."

"Very simply, my good cousin of Gui replied the King, whose face had now rela from the harsh and acrid aspect it had bo throughout the morning; "it was Miron t me."

"I had forgotten, I had forgotten," repl the Duke. "He was in the room when packet arrived, and I must have given ven my thoughts aloud."

"Well, under such circumstances," repl the King, "I suppose I must pardon, cousin Guise, your having gone to pay your hom somewhere else, as Monsieur de Villequ insinuates, when the King much wanted y presence."

"Monsieur de Villequier is, as usual, wron replied the Duke of Guise frowning upon h "Where he seeks for or finds such abundanc evil motives to attribute to other men, I do know. May it not be in his own bosom? I we for your Majesty's service, to inspect a body three thousand men, about to march early t morning from Laucome to join the army of

Duke of Nevers, and it was only as I returned that I heard of this unfortunate business."

"Perhaps his Highness thinks," said Villequier, not unwilling to increase any feeling of ill-will between the King and the Duke, "perhaps his Highness thinks that your Majesty would have done more wisely to have waited till his return, and not to have communicated the news from Savoy at all to the States, till you had consulted him upon it."

Villequier had almost said, "till you had asked his permission;" but he feared that a part of the King's anger might fall back upon himself. The Duke of Guise, however, saw through all his purposes in a moment, and replied, "Far from it, Monsieur de Villequier! I think, on the contrary, that I should have done more wisely if, instead of inspecting the troops at all — although Nevers, who is my enemy, might have reproached me for neglect — I had waited till the King had risen, to convey the expression of his will in person to the States-General. Sire, I humbly crave your Majesty's pardon for this one instance of neglect; and, to prove how

sorry I am that it has occurred, I will unde take to show the Clergy and the Commons suc good motives for changing their decision, th your Majesty's name and honour shall n suffer by the invasion of your territories unr sisted."

"They will refuse you, Guise; they wi refuse you," replied the King. "I know the well. You think to rule them, Guise; but t first time you speak of money to Commons to Clergy, you will find that cabalistic wor money, acts on them as the sign of the cr upon the fiends we read of, and makes t seeming angels resume their shapes of devils a moment."

"Well, Sire, well," exclaimed the Duke Guise, tossing his lofty head with a proud smi "if they refuse us, we will shame them. You a I together will put our lances in the rest, as days of old: we will call the nobility of Fran about us; and I will promise, at my own e pense, without craving these penurious Commo for a sol, with my own men and your Majesty good help, in three weeks' time to drive t

Savoyard back to his mountain den. But no, Sire, no! They will not refuse me; and I pledge myself before this hour to-morrow to bring you such tidings from both clergy and commons as you could wish to hear."

"If you do, cousin," cried the King eagerly, "if you do, you are my best of friends and counsellors for ever."

"Fear not, Sire; fear not," replied the Duke of Guise; "I will be bold to undertake it. But I must see the presidents and some of the deputies speedily, to know what are the vain and idle notions on which they have hesitated in regard to a step imperatively necessary. I will therefore humbly take my leave, beseeching you to think well of me during my absence, even though my good Lord of Villequier be at your Majesty's right elbow."

Thus saying the Duke retired, and the King, turning to Villequier, asked with some anxiety "Think you, Villequier, that he will succeed?"

"I know not, Sire," replied Villequier; "but I should judge not. They have too far committed themselves to retract, let the question be

what it would, but are
where money is concer
"Well, well," said
the best. And now,
of what can be done,
seventy-five thousand
What a sum! In the
call hither your young
be, without loss of an
him appear at the Cou
concealed, but be rea
Let him bring what m
above all, do not let
Villequier. Let them
not, I have a scheme
will mature itself in
should ever be hurrie
be formed of elements
that it may fit itself in
stances. It will matu
quier; it will mature
to this other terrible b
"Pray, Sire, what is
quier with some alarm

Blois Henry had shown so much more activity and application to serious matters, that even his favourite had forgotten his character. "Pray, what terrible business does your Majesty speak of?"

"Have you not heard," exclaimed the King, "have you not heard, that the boat was upset in coming down the Loire — the boat with the parrots and monkeys; and my great beautiful black ape, Ridolin-din-din, was nearly drowned, and has caught such a cold, that it is feared he will die! — Sweet creature, he is a beauty, and in his woollen nightcap and long gown is not at all unlike my mother. Poor fellow, have you not heard him coughing in the room beyond? I must go and give him some confection of quinces."

During a considerable portion of the day Henry devoted himself to his ape, but towards evening his anxiety in regard to the States and to the eruption of the Duke of Savoy seized upon him again. This was terribly increased by the arrival of a new courier, bearing more ample particulars than the former. The king

slept ill at night, and rose early the next m
ing; but still all the reports brought him of
disposition of the States made him imagine
no means would be taken to curb the ene
and that he himself would be left by
subjects the mockery and by-word of Eur
unable to repel the outrages of even the pet
of all the neighbouring princes. The sneer
many of his favourites and courtiers at the D
of Guise, too—their ironical smiles at the v
idea of his being able to change the announ
determination of two great bodies in the St
tended to irritate the King still more, and
drive him almost to madness.

In this state of mind he was walking up
down his chamber between eleven and tw
o'clock on the succeeding day, when sudde
hearing the bustle of many feet without,
himself threw open the door and beheld
Duke of Guise approaching with his usual t
and several other persons.

There was in the noble countenance of
Duke the glad consciousness of success;
Henry, eager for confirmation, exclaim

"What is it, cousin of Guise? What is it? Uncertainty drives me wild."

"Health to your Majesty," replied the Duke. "These gentlemen who follow me, Messieurs Brissac and Magnac, the Presidents of the Nobility, the Archbishop of Lyons representing the Clergy, and my good friend, Chapelle Marteau, President of the Third Estate, humbly approach your Majesty with a petition, that as the Duke of Savoy has committed a wanton infringement upon the territories of France, you would be graciously pleased to pronounce a declaration of war against that Prince, in which your dutiful subjects will aid and support your Majesty to the best of their ability."

The King's joy knew no bounds, and throwing his arms around the Duke of Guise, he kissed him on both cheeks. Recovering himself, however, in a few minutes, he received the deputies from the States with some degree of dignity. His joy, however, was still exuberant; and, in dismissing the petitioners, he said that the declaration should be immediately issued, and that he would trust to his best

friend and wisest cou
Duke of Guise, to r
unconquerable hand
victories, this new agg
of France.

As soon as the dep
forth again in the sa
Duke that he loved hi
earth, that his attachm
and inviolate, and tha
or urged against the
believe it.

" Cousin of Guise,
are people who woul
you aim at my crow
others who may try to
at your liberty or life.

" Sire, we neither
replied the Duke.

" Let us never belie
King ; " let us never
swear, Guise, let us s
and undoubting sinceri
each other for ever !

the altar even now! Let us swear it by the Holy Communion, by which we dare not swear falsely, and then the insinuations of our enemies will be as empty air!"

"Most willingly, Sire," replied the Duke; "I am ready this moment. It is near the hour of mass, and having nothing in my heart but good towards your Majesty, I am ready this very moment."

"Come then, come to the chapel," cried the King. And taking the Duke of Guise by the hand he led the way, followed by only the two attendants who were in the anteroom. In ten minutes more the King and the Duke might be seen kneeling before the same altar, calling down the wrath of God upon their heads if they ever did one act of enmity towards each other, drinking of the same consecrated cup, and dividing the host between them.*

* This awful fact is but too certain.

CH.

It was a bright clear f
and streets of that mo
old town, called Blois,
fined, without the s
smoke or haze, and f
the chamber of Cather
who sat and gazed o
object that passed alon

As she thus sat and
a glittering troop of c
from the castle gates, a
the town, and she co
of the Duke of Guise,
Brissac, and the grace
Montsoreau, riding ne
of the troop.

"The Duke has go
your Majesty," said th

bed on which lay Catherine de Medici, sick in body and uneasy in mind. "The Duke has gone forth, and a large train with him."

"Then the King will soon be here," replied the Queen-mother. "Go into the further chamber, good Bridget, and wait there till he leaves me. If Madame de Noirmontier arrives from Paris before he is gone, bid her wait there too. I will see her after, and be glad to see her."

The attendant had scarcely retired, when Henry III. himself entered with a slow step, a dull frowning brow, and lips turned down, giving his countenance a diabolical expression of sneering malice, which contrasted strongly with the white and red paint which he had used, and the gay foppery of his apparel.

"You sent for us, good mother," he said. "How goes it with you? Has the fever left you, or do you still suffer?"

"My sufferings are of no moment," replied Catherine de Medici. "They will soon pass, Henry, and I shall be well again. But the illnesses of states pass not so soon, my son; and

upon your acts, at the present moment, depends the welfare of France for centuries."

"I know it, madam," replied Henry sullenly. "But may I ask upon what particular occasion your Majesty has thus resumed the maternal rod?"

"The occasion is this, my son," replied the Queen: "I find that you are opposing Guise, when you have no power to oppose him; and you are opposing him in things where your opposition will not increase your power, but will increase his. Were you to oppose him firmly but stedfastly on points where reason, and right, and the welfare of the State were upon your side, however blind they might be for a time, the people would come over to your side in the end. But if you oppose him in things where your pride, or your vanity, or your selfishness is concerned, depend upon it his party will every day increase; for Guise having identified himself with the people and the Catholic Church, his foibles will be treated far more leniently by both church and people than yours."

"Guise!—Guise!—Guise!" cried the King in a bitter tone. "For ever, Guise! I am sick to death of the very name. What would you have, Madam? Have I not yielded almost every thing to him? Have not all his demands been granted, till they become so numerous that I have not wherewithal to stop their mouths? Did I not sign the decree of July? Did I not declare old scarlet Bourbon next heir to the Crown? Did I not satisfy the cravings of Nemours and of Mayenne? Did I not banish Epernon; give the Duke all sorts of posts; yield him up towns and cities? Did I not render him king of one half of France? What is it that I have refused him?"

"In many points you mistake, my son," replied the Queen. "You have yielded more than one of these things, not to him, but to the League. You refused to him, too, the sword of Constable; and in that perhaps you were right. At all events he himself seemed to think that you were so, for he has not pressed the demand: but after promising to the League, as one of their towns of surety, the city of Orleans, which

both you and I know
now persuade Guise a
inserted in the edict
town promised was D
on a little hill, as if y
trumpery evasion, you
wit of a Lorraine. G
upon the small decep
doing now? Quarre
demands that which
right of every gener
namely, the right of
guards. Such has e
well know. The ma
your own jealous disp
not right, it would
when he is right, and
is an insult, and the n
ance."

"Madam," said th
of all you say, Guise
King of France. H
these three days, refus
sary to maintain my c

provide for the safety of the State? Does he not try to keep me a beggar, that I may have no means of asserting my own rights and dignity?"

"No," replied the Queen; "No, Henry! He did not refuse you the impost; it was the States. If I heard rightly, he spoke in favour of it."

"Ay, spoke!" cried the King. "But how did he speak? Lukewarmly — unwillingly. The States soon saw which way his wishes turned. Had he not been playing the hypocrite, he would have commanded it in a moment. Did he not show how he could command in that business of Savoy? Four-and-twenty hours were sufficient for him to make every man in Clergy and in Commons eat their words. This is something very like sovereign power, madam. It is power such as I never possessed myself."

"Ay, and then you were grateful to him for its exercise," replied Catherine; "and swore eternal friendship to him on the altar!"

"Certainly, but his ambitious views have be-

come far more outrageous since then," re
the King angrily. "Has he not exacted
Henry of Navarre shall be excluded by r
from the succession? Has he not forced
Count de Soissons to receive absolution
the Pope? Has not he blazed abroad, thro
out all the world, the letters of the Pope hir
thanking him for his efforts to put down he
and exhorting him to persevere, as if he
none other were King of France? And
he must have guards, must he! now he
have guards! When will the crown be wan
His leading staff is already the sceptre,
sways all things; his chair is already the thr
for from it emanates every movement of
States-General of France. Yes, madam,
the throne and sceptre he has gained; and
the leaves of his ducal coronet gradually ch
ing themselves into fleurs-de-lis, and the b
lets of the close crown ready to meet abov
head."

"But to the guards which he demands,"
Catherine de Medici, "he has a right
Lieutenant-general of the kingdom; and

should you oppose him on a point where he is right?"

"Ay, the guards! the guards!" cried Henry. "Let him have them, madam; let him have them. But nevertheless, in a few days, all this will be over." And so saying, without waiting for further reply, the King turned and quitted his mother's chamber."

Following a private staircase, which had been so constructed as only to afford a means of communication between the various apartments of the royal family, the King descended to a large chamber, or sort of hall, with a deep window looking out towards the Loire. He found already in that chamber several of his most intimate and confidential friends and favourites, who, notwithstanding the high degree of confidence which the King placed in them, viewed the gloomy sullenness of his countenance with some sort of apprehension. In truth, when the fit was upon him, it could never be told where the blow would fall; and he often thus deprived himself of counsel and assistance in his moments of greatest need.

There were some
whose purpose it was
which he suffered, ev
in some degree, then
d'Aumont, who had
return, advanced, a
dressed not one wo
sullenly till he had
began the conversati
tone. At length th
and, gazing in his
without my veto; wi
probation? Do the
determinations be la

"They do, Sire,
d'Aumont; "and
consider that the ap
Guise would be qu
already made him f
Sire; for one of his
long ago, if I would
make me Governor
that the States, at
would make your M

Duke of Montpensier, to whom you had given it."

The King paused for a moment, with his hands clasped, and his eyes gazing on the ground. At length he raised them suddenly, saying, "Hark ye, D'Aumont!" and then spoke a few words in a whisper, as the Marshal bent down his ear.

D'Aumont turned somewhat pale as he listened; his brows knit, and a certain degree of wildness came into his eyes; but he answered, the moment the King had done, "I have not rightly understood your Majesty. But it seems to me, that the only way a sovereign can deal with rebellious subjects and traitors, is to cause them to be arrested, and deliver them over to their natural judges, to be tried according to law."

Henry waved his hand with a look of contemptuous disappointment, and then added, looking fixedly in D'Aumont's face, "You will be silent!"

"On my honour, Sire," replied D'Aumont;

and bowing low, but
quitted the chamber.

Without noticing t
were standing at th
room, Henry called t
by the staircase into
up for a moment at
sunshine, and then
scene around; but t
plunge him in deepe
turning to the boy
the hall, and bid Mo
alone."

He then stood wit
his chest, gazing up
his feet, and when C
him by the arm, and
to the other side of
silent for some mom
to Crillon he said, "
French guards, Crillo
which I want you and

"Speak, Sire," r
bluff manner. "If t

a soldier and a man of honour can do for you, I am ready to do it."

"Are not kings the highest magistrates in their realm, Crillon?" said the King, gazing in his face; "and have they not a right to judge their own subjects, and pass sentence upon them?"

"I wish to Heaven I were a lawyer, Sire," replied the old soldier, "and then I would give your Majesty an answer. But on my honour, at present, I have not considered the subject."

"Well then, Crillon," continued the King, "to put it in another shape: I have a subject who is more king than myself; who stands between me and the sun; who grasps at all the power in the realm; and who, day by day, is increasing in ambition and insolence."

"Your Majesty means the Duke of Guise," said Crillon; "I know him in a minute by the description."

"You are right," said Henry. "But this must not continue long, Crillon. Methinks a small body of my guards, with a brave and

determined comman
enemy, of this vi
lawyers of my real
law and justice a
cause this deed to b
take it, Crillon?"

"Sire," replied
jesty's pardon for
is a public execution
must not interfere
As to my becoming
jesty does not conce

Henry looked
ground, and then
wrath and anguish,

"No, Sire, they
"There is a way of
your Majesty has
my feelings and hal
way. I will now h
Majesty, and going
Highness of Guise,
his people, tell him
King and his coun

pany me to the field with equal arms. The Duke, bad as he is, is not a man to refuse such an invitation; and I think I can insure your Majesty, that you shall not be troubled with the Duke of Guise for a long time to come."

The King smiled. "Alas! Crillon," he said, "you deceive yourself. You forget what you undertake. Remember, you purpose to strive with, hand to hand, the most powerful man in Europe — the most dexterous and skilful in the use of every weapon upon the face of the earth — the most fearless, the most active, the most prompt, whose hand never trembles, whose eye never winks, whose foot never slips. He would slay thee, Crillon; he would slay thee in a moment."

"I know it, Sire," replied Crillon calmly; but not before I have slain him. If I choose to make my body a sheath for his sword, I will make his body a sheath for mine, while my hand holds tight against my breast the hilt of his weapon, to keep in my own spirit till I see his fled. This can be done, Sire, and

it shall be done within these two hours. give your Majesty good day, for there is r time to spare."

"Stay, Crillon, stay!" said the King, "command you not to think of it. If yo attempt it, you will ruin all my plans. I than you for your willingness. I owe you no ill-wi for your refusal. You will find the page the door: tell him to send Monsieur Laugnac to me — Montpizat Laugnac, yo know."

"Oh, I know him, Sire," replied Crillo "He is a man of small scruples. I will te the page as your Majesty bids me." An he retired from the presence of the King wit a quick step.

The manner in which the King dealt wit Laugnac formed a strange contrast with h manner towards Crillon. The moment that th former, who was first gentleman of his chambe and captain of the famous band of Quarant cinq, joined him in the garden, the King seiz him by the hand, saying, "Laugnac, the Du of Guise must die!"

"Certainly, Sire," replied Languac, as if it were a thing perfectly natural. "I have thought so some time."

"Will you undertake it, Laugnac," demanded the King. "You and your Quarante-cinq?"

"I must have more help than that, Sire," said Laugnac, "if it is to be done out in the streets, in the open day, which I suppose must be the case, as he is seldom out at night."

"Oh no, no, no! that will never do!" exclaimed the King. "We must have no rashness, Laugnac. He never rides but with a train, which would set you at defiance; and, besides, the town is filled with Guisards. You would have men enough upon you to slay you all in five minutes. We must put him off his guard; we must lull him into tranquillity, and then draw him to some private place, where you and your good fellows, posted behind the arras, can strike him to the heart before he is aware."

"It is an excellent good plan, Sire," exclaimed Laugnac enthusiastically. "I will speak with my good friend, Larchant, who is a bold man and strong, a mortal enemy of the Guise, and

a most devoted servant of your Majesty. We will soon arrange a plan together which cannot fail."

"Swear him to secrecy," cried the King "and remember to-morrow must not pass without its being done. If you can find Villequier too, who ought to be returned by this time, for we have much to do together to-morrow, consult with him, for in a matter of poisoning or of the knife you know, Laugnac, he has not his equal in France."

The King smiled, and Laugnac smiled too, at the imputation which they cast on another of the dark deeds exactly similar to those they were both plotting themselves.

"Do you not think, your Majesty," said the latter, "that it could be done just about the time of the Duke's coming to the Council to-morrow?"

"Excellent, good," said the King, "for that will cut him off, just ere this marriage that is talked of. But go quick, Laugnac, and make all the arrangements, and let me know the plan to-night; for look where the very man comes:"

and he pointed down the alley that led to the château, where the Duke of Guise was seen approaching alone.

"He is alone," said Laugnac. "Could it not be done now? I and another could make sure of it, if your Majesty would detain him here till I seek aid."

"On no account," said the King, grasping his wrist tight. "On no account, Laugnac. You forget all the windows of the château see us. The rest of his creatures would escape, and I must have not a few of them in prison. No! we will be tender with him. He shall be our sweet cousin of Guise, our well-beloved counsellor and friend. Greet him gracefully as you pass by him, and tell the page to seek, high and low, for Villequier, and bring him to me."

Laugnac bowed low, and walked away, and as he went he left the Duke of Guise the whole of the path, pulling off his hat till the plumes almost swept the ground, but without speaking. Guise bowed to him graciously; but, evidently in haste, passed on towards the King, whom he saluted with every demonstration of respect,

and on whom in return Henry smiled with the most gracious expression that he could assume.

"What seeks our fair cousin of Guise?" said the King. "I know this is a busy hour with him in general, and therefore judge that it must be matter of some importance brings him now."

"Not exactly so, Sire," replied the Duke. "There is but little business of importance stirring now, when so many of the multitude, lately collected in Blois, have returned to their own homes for the approaching festival. I came, however, to beseech your Majesty to grant me permission to absent myself for a few days on the same joyful occasion. All business for the time ceasing, my presence will not be necessary."

"Assuredly, assuredly!" replied Henry, turning pale at the very idea of the Duke escaping from his hands. "But do you go soon, fair cousin. I thought that you proposed the marriage of your fair ward for to-morrow; indeed, I heard that every thing was prepared, and I myself intended to be one of the guests."

"We have not forgotten your Majesty's gra-

cious promise," replied the Duke. "Every thing is prepared, and half an hour before high mass we shall all be waiting for your Majesty in the revestry of the chapel. Never yet have I seen two young beings so happy in their mutual love; and as we have broken through some cold forms, in consideration of the many services which the lover has rendered to his future bride, they are always together, and clinging to each other, as if they fancied that something would yet separate them."

Henry smiled, but there was a certain mixture in it, which rendered it difficult to say whether the expression was gracious or ironical. "Well then, good cousin," he said, "as you have such mighty business toward, we had better hold our council as early as possible to-morrow, and not wait till the usual hour. Let it be as near day-break as possible. The god of day does not open his eyes too soon at this season of the year. And yet I fear that the business of various kinds, that we have before us, will occupy more time than one council can afford. Thus we may be obliged to detain you

at Blois, fair cousin,
fear."

"I did not intend
Duke, "till somewhe
mas-day, which woul
of being present at
be also absent so sho
tainly not longer t
that the interruption

"Well, be it so; b
"We know that you
for time lost. As to t
contract in the revest
I think that, notwiths
treasury, I have a je
give the bride."

"I beseech your
replied the Duke o
good husband will b
service without such
scension."

After a few more
the Duke took leave
the garden walking

every moment more and more impatient for the arrival of Villequier.

"Where can he be?" he muttered to himself. "He promised to be back before nine o'clock this morning. What can detain him? By Heavens! he will lose the best part of our enterprise if he stays. Can he have met with some mishap by the way — or has some lady poisoned him with champignons or with Cyprus wine — or tried cold steel upon him — or shot him with a silver bullet in honour of his great master. No steel would touch him, I should think, if all tales are true. But here he comes; here he comes, alive and well, with the eye of a wolf and the footfall of a cat. — He is a handsome animal notwithstanding, even now, if he would but paint his lips a little, for they are too pale. Something has gone wrong. He seems agitated; and to see Villequier moved by any thing is indeed a wonder. Why, how now, dear friend? What is it that affects you? I declare your lip quivers, and your cheek is red. What is the meaning of this?"

"Why, Sire," replied Villequier, "I just

met the Duke of Guise in the hall o
château, and he not only tells me tha
marriage of his niece goes forward, but
your Majesty has promised to sign the con
and to be present at the ceremony. How
intend to withdraw yourself, I do not k
but to throw, at least, some obstacle in
way, I said that my signature had not
asked; and while my application was b
the Parliament of Paris, the marriage could
take place without that signature. He answ
haughtily, Sire, not by requesting, but by
manding, me to be in the revestry of the c
at the hour of half-past eleven; and he a
with a significant tone, that he would teach
the use of pen and ink."

Henry showed no wrath: his mind was
up to his proceedings; his dark determin
taken; and utterly remorseless himself
sported in his own imagination with the
of Guise's death, and only smiled at his
duct to Villequier, as the skilful angler
amused the large trout dash at the gilded
knowing that a moment after he will have

tyrant of the stream upon his own hook, and panting on the bank.

"You shall be in the revestry, Villequier," said the King; "you shall sign the marriage contract, for the King commands you as well as the Duke of Guise; and surely two such potent voices must be obeyed.

Villequier paused for a minute or two ere he replied, calculating what might be the King's motives in his present conduct. He knew Henry well, and knew his vacillating changeable disposition; and he suspected that he was determined to violate his promise to Gaspar de Montsoreau upon some inducement, either of hope or fear, held out to him by the Duke of Guise. He was well aware, however, that if the means taken had been disagreeable, the King, though he might have endured them smilingly in the presence of the Duke, would have burst forth into passion, almost frantic, when conversing with him. He therefore replied straightforwardly, "I suppose, Sire, the younger brother has outbid the elder."

"Wrong, wrong, good friend," replied the

King. "Your hawk
Villequier. The Du
Is not that quite suffic
"I hope it will not
Villequier, now begin
to catch the King's m
not be so long."
"Ha, René! D
now?" said Henry.
not this girl's guardia
the Duke out of the w
"Indubitably," an
the only thing that af
is her father's will, ap
Duke of Guise to be
brothers are not name
"Well then," said
of marriage in due an
this very night, in the
vaut and Gaspar, Ma
in the revestry at the
with you your gay
golden crowns. You
and I will sign the c

means I think to make the fair Lady sign the contract too, while the Duke of Guise's bridegroom discovers his way into a dungeon of the château. You have been so long absent, I feared you would not come in time to hear all this."

"Why, Sire," replied Villequier, "I was forced to be absent; for although your Majesty seems to have forgotten a certain paper given to the Abbé de Boisguerin, I have not."

"Ha!" said the King, "I had forgotten indeed. We must suppress that, Villequier; we must suppress that, if he will not consent to our plans; which, I see by your face, it is not your opinion that the worthy Abbé will do. You must get it from him and suppress it."

Villequier smiled at the very thought. "He will never give it up to be suppressed, Sire," replied the Marquis. "Your Majesty little knows the man."

"Well, then, suppress him!" said the King with a laugh; "suppress him, Villequier, and the paper with him. Under the great blaze made by this business of the Guise, his affair

will be but as one
country girl, with a
a denier to hang u
Suppress him, Ville
know no one so capa
dow clear of such flie
"Yes, Sire," repli
wasp, not a fly. He
and sureties against
more powerful frien
us believed, or at le
of gaining them. Th
set him free of his vo
non sent for him in
ness of the attempt u
and they are now sw
levying forces togeth
other hour; and her
disporting himself as
and, just like a butte
he arrives in Blois la
with a train of twenty
number of sumpter
gay attire near Ango

aspires to the hand of the fair heiress himself."

"But what is to be done, Villequier?" said the King smiling. "It seems to me that all the world are seeking her. Suppose we send for an auctioneer, and set her up *aux enchères*. But, to speak seriously, what will you do with this cidevant Abbé?"

"I have done with him something already," replied Villequier, "that with all his art he could not prevent nor know. I found this young Marquis of Montsoreau somewhat stubborn to counsel. He loved not the plan of coming and lying concealed at Blois. Though he is politic and artful at seasons himself, yet now he was all passion and fury. Nothing would serve him but he must come to Blois in open day, with a hundred lances at his back. He would fight his brother, it seemed, and cut his throat. He would beard the Guise; and he would compel your Majesty and me to fulfil our promise to the letter. That the girl had escaped he attributed to my connivance; and, by Heavens! I almost feared he would have laid

violent hands upon m
skilful teazing, I four
Boisguerin, whose c
shaken, had resume
urging on his forme
rash and violent act
of getting him killed
the good youth down
would give him pro
I hid him where he c
and then entrapped
the paper that we ha
him that the person
and I destined this f
Marquis of Montsore
he had obtained tha
and direct view to tha
he had told me so;
ately to sign his conse
Majesty may imagin
youth's rage was suc
would have broken i
stationed two men to
became afterwards as

vinced, by what passed, that we had throughout been dealing sincerely with him, and will be ready at the hour to-morrow. When the good Abbé, perhaps, hears that the whole affair is concluded, that Guise is gone, and your Majesty powerful, he may judge it more wise to be silent and resigned. We can tempt him, first, with some post; we can alarm him, if that will not do, with some peril; and lastly, if we fail in both, then we must find some way of putting an end to the matter altogether."

"That will be easily done," replied the King, his mind reverting to the Duke of Guise. "But come, Villequier, let us go and consult with Laugnac. I told him, before you came, to seek for you and consult with you. We must trust as few as possible in this business, and I must see to the whole myself, for this is a step on which, if we but slip, we fall to inevitable perdition."

CHA

Was the Duke of G
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the power which the
could not but render
highest degree to the
and indolent, was je
which he failed hims
benefit of his people?
rant that the Monarc
feeble, was as remorse
unknown to him, tha
surrounded the King
hatred and jealousy;
ready hands and bas
tempt any thing wh
might warrant?

He was not so ign

had been warned sufficiently, days and weeks before; but even had that not been the case, on that very night he received sufficient intimations of his danger to put him on his guard.

He had presided at the supper-table as Grand Master of the King's household, and he had received his guests with easy courtesy. The meal was over somewhat sooner than usual; and, the business of the State being considerably slackened, in consequence of the approaching festival of Christmas, he sat in his cabinet with Charles of Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut only, enjoying an hour of refreshment in calm and tranquil conversation upon subjects, which, however agitating to them, was merely a matter of pleasant interest to him.

Charles of Montsoreau sat by his side making some notes of various little things that the Duke told him, and Marie de Clairvaut was seated on a stool at his feet, while he looked down upon her, from time to time, with the

of his cabinet, and the Duke knowing it to be the page, bade him enter; when the boy Ignati appearing, informed him that the Count de Schomberg was without.

"Bid him come in," replied the Duke, keeping his seat, and making a sign for his companions not to stir. "Welcome, Schomberg," he said; "you see that I am plotting no treason here. What do you think of my two children? Joinville will be jealous of my eldest son. But, jesting apart, I think you know the Count de Logères. My niece, Marie, I know you have had many a time upon your knee in her infancy."

Schomberg bowed to each, but gravely; and replied to the Duke, who held out his hand to him, "My dear Duke, I wish every body were as well persuaded that you are plotting no treason as I am. But I come to speak to your Highness upon a matter of business. I have a warning to give you," he added in a whisper.

"Oh! speak it aloud; speak it aloud," replied

the Duke. "If it co
well speak it before th

"Indeed!" said Sc
tating, and running hi
as if calculating how h
good Lord Duke," he s
you know that there
better than myself, th
affect to be a zealot, b
call one of the Politic

"I know Schombe
the Duke; "you are n
tisan. I can make th
and love the friend no
say?"

"Why this, my Lo
"Look up above the d
eyes. Do you see ho
carved in the black o
pine, and how all th
stick out, ready to wo
it?"

"Yes, I see, replie

know the history of that porcupine, Schomberg?"

"Yes," answered the Count, "I know it well, my Lord of Guise. Both in the stonework and the woodwork of this castle, there are many such. They were placed there, I think, my Lord — am I not right? — by an old monarch of France, as a sort of device, to signify that whoever grasps royalty too rudely, will suffer injury in consequence."

The Duke smiled in the same placid mood as before, but replied, "In the next chamber, Schomberg, which is my own bedchamber, you may see the device of Francis the First too, — a salamander unhurt in the midst of flames; which may be interpreted to mean, that strong courage is never more at ease than in the midst of perils."

A grave smile came over the face of Schomberg, to find the figures in which he involved his warning so easily retorted by the Duke of Guise. "I have heard of your Highness," he said, without noticing the Duke's reply, "that not very many years ago you were known to swim against the stream of the Loire armed at



"Why, what would you have me to do, Schomberg?" said the Duke in a tone not exactly indifferent, but still showing no great interest in the subject.

"I would have you mount your horse this night," replied Schomberg," or at day-break to-morrow. I would have you gather your train together, take these two young people with you, and retiring to Paris, inform the King that you had proof your life was not safe at Blois."

The Duke of Guise meditated for a moment, and then replied, "Schomberg, I cannot grasp this fear. Brought up to arms from my youth, cradled in the tented field, with death surrounding me at every hour of life, I cannot feel as other men might feel in moments of peril to myself. Neither will I ever have it said of me, that I willingly fled from my post under the apprehension of any personal danger."

"By our old friendship, Guise," replied Schomberg, "by our companionship in the fields of other days, I beseech you to consider and to judge wisely. Remember, if the vengeance of a monarch, or the instigation of villanous cour-

tiers, were to have
beneath the blow
become of your chi
what would become
friends, placed, as
high pinnacle, to
idle minions with th
become of your son

"Joinville must
the Duke, "and gu
own sword. I was
a parent's care; wit
me; with my father'
of envy and hatred
my own sword. Wi
those enemies to th
show himself worthy

He paused, and
two, and then adde
I do not see that th
Here, in the castle,
than the King. Wh
accompanied, that it
me, if they attacked

assassin might dog my steps, it is true; but I do not know that man upon the face of the earth, who, hand to hand with me, would not have more than an equal share of fear and danger. However, I will think of what you have said, and will take good care to be more upon my guard than ever. At the same time, Schomberg, I thank you most sincerely, and look upon your regard as one of the best possessions that I have."

"Guise," said Schomberg, rising and approaching the door, "I have failed with you. But I yield not my point yet. I will send those to you who may have more influence."

"Stay, Schomberg, stay!" cried the Duke; but his friend passed through the door and would not return.

Charles of Montsoreau then raised his voice in the same cause as Schomberg, and Marie de Clairvaut entreated anxiously that he would yield to what had been proposed. But at them the Duke only laughed.

"Hush, hush!" he said. "Logères, you do not know what you say. There, kiss her and

be gone. To-morr
more to part. Say
more. You, a chi
of fear! Call thy
bed, and rise to-m
blooming cheeks. F
long to be quit of th

Remonstrance wa
and the Duke of G
ment, gave himself
were fixed upon t
where was depicted
lars of which could
by the dim light of

After he had ga
however, his eyes as
a fixed, intense, anc
He passed his hand
felt them dim or daz
together and gazed
" Strange, very stra
starting up from the
and advanced direc
room on which his

gazing stedfastly on the same spot. At length, as he approached close to the wall, his features relaxed, and he said with a smile, "It is gone! These delusions of the sight are wonderful!"

He had not yet returned to his seat, when the door on his right hand opened gently, and the form of a woman glided in. It was that of the beautiful being with whom he had parted in some anger at the King's ball, and she gazed at him, evidently surprised to see him standing with the lamp in his hand close to the wall, on a side where there was no exit.

"In the name of Heaven, Guise! what is the matter?" she said. "I heard you speaking as I came in. You are pale; your lip quivers!"

"It is nothing; it is nothing," replied the Duke, putting down the lamp, and taking her hand. "This is, indeed, dear and kind of you, Charlotte. I trusted, I was sure, that your anger for a light offence would not last long."

"It would have lasted long, Guise," she said, "or at least its effects would not have passed away, had it not been for the warning that I

have received concerning you. Guise, you would not have seen me now—you would never have seen me in these rooms again ——"

"Nay, nay," interrupted the Duke, "traduce not so your own nature. Say not that a few unthinking words would render her so harsh, who is so gentle."

"They were not unthinking words, Henry of Guise," replied the Lady. "They were words of deep meaning, to be read and understood at once. Think you that I could misunderstand them? Think you that I could not read that Guise would not suffer the pure to dwell with the impure? However," she added quickly, seeing that the Duke was going to interrupt her, "let me speak of other things. I was about to say that you would not have seen me this night, you would never have seen me in these chambers again, had I not learned that your life was in danger; and then my fears for you showed me that my love was unchanged, and I came, at all risks, to warn you, and to beseech you to be gone."

"Nay, nay," replied the Duke. "How can

I be gone when you are here, Charlotte? And, besides, there is no real danger. It is Schomberg has frightened you, I know. He came here with the same tale; but I showed him there was no danger."

"It was not from Schomberg!" said Madame de Noirmontier vehemently. "I have never seen Schomberg since I have been here. It was from the Queen; it was from Catherine herself that I heard it. She told me to tell you; she told me to warn you. Her son, she said, had not divulged to her his scheme; but from her knowledge of the man, and from the words he used, she was certain that he would attempt your life within three days."

"Then his attempt will fail, dear Charlotte," said the Duke, holding her hand tenderly in his. "Fear not for me; I am fully upon my guard; and in this château, and this town, am stronger than the King himself."

"Oh Guise, Guise, you are deceiving yourself," she said, bursting into tears. "Twice I have been at your door this night, but the page told me there was some one with you; and now I

have come determine
see you making prep
me entreat you, let m
tinued, as Guise wipe
Guise, nay; in this I v
for your own sake, for
shall treat me ill, as y
again. You shall m
slave. You will not
you see me kneeling
sunk upon her knee
her fair hands in e
raising her tenderly, v
heard at the door;
give the command t
the room.

"My Lord," he s
Chapelle Marteau, a
men, desiring earnest

Madame de Noi
round the room, an
through the door by
entered. "Be not
"you cannot pass

men will not be with me above a few minutes. Pass into that room, and wait till they are gone. I have a thousand things to say to you, and will dismiss them soon."

After a moment's hesitation she did as he directed, and turning to the page, the Duke bade him admit the party who were waiting without. It consisted of Chapelle Marteau, the President de Neuilli, a gentleman of the name of Mandreville, the Duke's brother the Cardinal de Guise, and the Archbishop of Lyons.

The Duke received them with that winning grace for which he was famous, and soon learned from them that their visit was owing to the information received from the Count de Schomberg. Every one then present, but the Archbishop of Lyons, urged him strongly to quit Blois immediately. They had come in a body, they said, in hopes that their remonstrances might have the greater effect. Each had heard in the course of the evening those rumours which generally announce great events: some had been told that the Duke was arrested; some that he had been absolutely

assassinated in the ga
some that the act was
by a number of soldie
introduced into the c

Guise listened sil
tention, displaying i
of deference and re
those who showed
fate. He replied,
and hoped that bot
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berg, originated in
words, or in those id
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of great political a
Besides this, he said
disposed to attempt
such an act would b
possible; and that, co
his duty to his coun
King seeking such
strongest reason for
Monarch's animosity
wards him out of enmi

and a disposition to repress and tyrannise over the States.

"If such be his feelings," continued the Duke, "we must consider ourselves as two armies in presence of each other, and the one that retreats of course awards the victory to his adversary."

The Archbishop of Lyons, perhaps, was the person who decided the fate of the Duke of Guise; for had the party which came to him been unanimous and urgent in their remonstrance, there is a probability that he would have yielded; but the Archbishop seemed doubtful and undecided. He said that he thought, indeed, it might be well the Duke should go; at least for a time. But they had to consider, also, the probabilities of the King making any attempt upon the Duke. Though weak, timid, and indolent, Henry was shrewd and farseeing, he said. The only result that could follow an attempt upon a person so beloved by the whole nation, and especially by the States, as the Duke of Guise, would be to arm the people of France in an instant

frantic, vicious, or criminal act? He was no better, the deputy said, than a cunning madman, such as was frequently seen, who, having determined upon any act, however absurd or evil might be the consequences, even to the destruction of his own self, would arrive at it by some means, and go directly to his purpose, in despite of all obstacles. He contended that they had good reason to know that the King devised evil against the Duke; and they might depend upon it that no consideration of policy, right, or religion, would prevent him from executing his purpose by some means.

He spoke truly, and with more thorough insight into the character of the King than any one previously had done; but the resolution of the Duke of Guise, as we have said before, was already taken.

"My good friends," he said in conclusion, "I thank you most sincerely, and I shall ever feel grateful for the interest that you have taken in me, and for your anxiety regarding me on the present occasion. But my resolution is taken, and must be unalterable. I cannot but acknow-

lenge that the view of Monsieur de Mand
may have much truth in it; but, neverth
matters are now at such a point, that if I
u see Jeanin coming in at that window, I w
ant seek the door."

Against a determination so forcibly
pressed, there was, of course, no possibili
having further argument: and after a wo
two more on different subjects of less inter
the Duke of Guise replying as briefly as po
to every thing that was said — the party
their leave and retired.

CHAP. XII.

THERE was at that time a large open space round the church of St. Sauveur, in Blois, where the people from the country used occasionally to exhibit their fruits and flowers for sale; and exactly opposite the great door of the church stood a large and splendid mansion, with an internal court-yard, part of which had been let to some of the deputies for the States-General. The principal floor, however, consisting of sixteen rooms, and several large passages and corridors, had been left untenanted, in consequence of the proprietor asking an exorbitant rent, till two or three days before the period of which we speak. Then, however, the apartment was taken suddenly, a number of attendants in new and splendid dresses appeared therein; and, as we have seen from the account of Villequier to the King, the Abbé de

Boisguerin arrived in Blois, with a splendid train of attendants, and took up his abode as the master of that dwelling.

About the same time that the conversations which we have detailed in the last chapter were going on in the cabinet of the Duke of Guise, the Abbé was seated in one of the rooms, which he had fixed upon for his own peculiar saloon. It was very customary in those days, and in France, for every chamber, except a great hall of reception, to be used also as a bed-room. But that was not the case in this instance; for the chamber, which was small, though very lofty, had been used by the former occupants as a cabinet, and had been chosen by the Abbé probably on account of its being so completely detached from every other chamber, that no sound of what was done or said therein could be overheard by any one.

He sat in a large arm-chair, with his feet towards the fire, and with his right elbow resting on a table covered with various sorts of delicacies. Those delicacies, however, were not the productions of the land in which he then lived,

but rather such as he had been accustomed to in other days, and which recalled former habits of life. There were fine dried fruits from the Levant, tunny and other fish from the Mediterranean; and the wines, though inferior to those of France, were from foreign vineyards.

Before him was standing a man whom we have had occasion to mention more than once — that Italian vagabond named Orbi, from whom, it may be remembered, Charles of Montsoreau delivered the boy Ignati. He was now dressed in a very different guise, however, from that which he had borne while wandering as a mere stroller from house to house. His shaggy black hair was trimmed and smooth; his beard was partially shaved and reduced to fair proportions, with a sleek mustachio, well turned and oiled, gracing his upper lip; his face, too, was clean; and a suit somewhat sombre in colour, but of good materials, displaying in the ruff and at the sleeves a great quantity of fine white linen and rich lace, left scarcely a vestige of

flamed, he strode up and down the chamber for a moment or two, with his heart swelling with bitterness and disappointed passion. "A curse upon this bungling hand," he cried, striking it upon the table, "that it should fail me at such a moment as that! I thought the young viper had been swept from my way for ever!—My aim was steady and true, too! His heart must be in some other place than other men's."

"Ha! my Lord," joined in the Italian in the tone of a connoisseur, "the arquebus is a pretty weapon, I dare say, in a general battle, but it is desperate uncertain in private affairs like that. You can never tell, to an inch or two, where the ball will hit. But, with a dagger, you can make sure to a button-hole; and even if there should be a struggle, it is always quite easy so to salve the point of your blade, that you make sure of your friend, even if you give him but a scratch. Now the attempt to poison a ball is all nonsense, for the fire destroys the venom."

"At what hour said you, Orbi?" demanded

the Abbé, without attending to his dissert
tion.

"Half an hour before high mass," replie
the man, "the marriage is to take place."

Again the Abbé de Boisguerin burst into
vehement fit of passion, and strode up an
down the room cursing and blaspheming, til
accidentally his eyes fell upon a small Venetia
mirror, and the aspect of his own countenance
ordinarily so calm and unmoved, now distorted
by rage and disappointment, made him start
A smile of scorn, even at himself, curled hi
lip; and calming his countenance by a grea
effort, he again seated himself, and mused fo
a moment.

"This must not, and shall not be," he said
at length. "Orbi, you are an experienced
hand, and doubtless dexterous. Will you stop
this going forward?"

The man smiled, stroked back his mus
tachios, and replied, "I thought you would b
obliged to take my way at last. Well, Mon
seigneur, I have no objection; but the time i

short. I told you what I expected for such an affair when I offered to do it in Paris."

"You shall have it! you shall have it!" replied the Abbé. "But if you do it, so that no suspicion ever falls on me, you shall have as much again this day two years; for nothing but the lives of these two young men stands between me and immense wealth."

"The worst of it all is," said the Italian, "that there is so short a time. It is to take place in the castle chapel; so there will be no going through the streets. To find him alone will be a matter of difficulty; and though I went over the passages, thinking it might come to this, yet I saw no one place, but at the door of the room called the revestry, where one could strike easily."

"I have seen the place," said the Abbé, "long ago; but I do not remember it so perfectly as to give you any aid. I know that the window of the room you mention looks into the court and gardens, and under the garden wall shall be a swift horse to bear you away. That is all I can do for you."

"I must do the rest for myself," replied the

man, "and will find s
it. Perhaps he may
he be eager, but may
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The Abbé de Bo
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risk life to win her
love and my revenge?
possible," he contin
within the castle, nev

accompanied, she is put, it would seem, entirely out of my power, now that Villequier has fallen off from me. — And yet," he continued meditating, " and yet, there is nothing impossible to the dauntless and the daring. — Could I not bring her to the postern gate of the garden an hour before this marriage is to take place, and then, with swift horses and a carriage ready, convey her once more far away? — We have done as bold and difficult a feat before; and methinks, if I could tell her that I have news to give her concerning her uncle's safety — for rumours of his danger must have reached her ears — she will not fail to come, and come alone. — Oh! if I once more get her in my power, she shall find no means to fly again, till, on the contrary, she shall be more inclined to kneel at my feet, and beseech that I would wed her. — So it shall be! I will write to her that, if at ten o'clock she will be alone at the postern gate of the castle, she will hear news that may save her uncle's life. Then, with the swiftest horses we can find, a few hours will take us far from pursuit! — I will carry her into Spain! Epernon is with

me and the way open! — It shall be done!" he said aloud; "it shall be done! But, then, this boy's death is scarcely needful! Why should I mind his living? — It will be but the greater torture to him to know that she is mine! — And yet, it were better he should die. All the tidings, and the rumours, and the bustle of his violent death in the castle will too much occupy the minds of men to let them notice our flight; so that we shall gain an hour or two. There is an eager and a daring spirit, also, within him — a keen and active mind — which might frustrate me once more in the very moment of hope. He must die! I have set my own life upon the chance; and what matters it whether one or two others are swept away before me? He must die! and then, without protection, she is mine. Once into Tourraine, and I am safe! — Ha! you are back again quickly, my good friend Orbi. Is all ready?"

"Every thing, sir," replied the man; "and if I could but get into the château, and stumble upon the youth alone, I might be able to accomplish the matter to-night. Could you

not furnish me with a billet to this Villequier, or some one? It matters not what; any empty words, just to make them admit me at the gates."

"Not to Villequier," said the Abbé; "not to Villequier. But I will write a few words to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut herself."

"That will do well! that will do well!" replied the man. "I am more likely to find him hanging about her apartments than any where else; and then one slight blow does the deed."

"Bring me paper and pens from the next room," cried the Abbé. "It shall be done this moment." And as soon as implements for writing were procured, he wrote a subtle epistle to Marie de Clairvaut, beseeching her to speak for a moment, at the postern gate of the château gardens early on the following day, to a person who would communicate something to her, which might save the life of her guardian the Duke of Guise. It was written in a feigned hand, and under the character of an utter stranger to her. Some mistakes too were made in the orthography of her name, and in regard to other circumstances, for the purpose of ren-

that he had felt at the moment that it was received.

He met with some difficulty in obtaining entrance to the château at so late an hour of the night; but the letter addressed to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut enabled him to effect that object at length, and he was directed towards the suite of apartments assigned to the Duke of Guise and his family. When he had once passed the two first gates, he met with no obstruction, but wandered through the long dimly lighted corridors, scarcely encountering a waking being on his way, and certainly none who seemed inclined to speak to him.

When he had reached that part of the building to which he had been directed, he looked round for some one to give him farther information, not absolutely intending to seek the apartments of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and deliver the note, but merely to obtain a general knowledge of how the different chambers were allotted. After passing on some way, without meeting any one or hearing a sound,

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ing out, and quietly

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sitting before a lar
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added, "But what

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he could not smoth
intention to cajole
all the information

even to induce him unconsciously to aid his purpose.

"Come, come, Signor Orbi," replied the boy, "I know you well, remember; and I know, that though you may have changed your doublet, you cannot have changed what is within it. If you do not say immediately what you want, I will call those who will make you." And he approached one of the other doors which the room displayed, and raised his hand towards the latch.

"Hist, hist, Ignati!" cried the Italian. "By Heavens! if you do, you shall never hear what I have got to tell you, — something that would make your heart beat with joy if you knew it."

"And what is that?" said the boy, still standing near the door, and looking at his fellow-countryman with a face of scorn and doubt.

"Come hither, and I will tell you," said the Italian; but the boy shook his head, and Orbi added in a low tone, "You know who your mother was, Ignati; but do you know your father?"

The boy gazed at him bitterly and in
without making any further answer; a
man added, "He is now in Blois."

Ignati instantly sprang forward toward
exclaiming, "Where? Where? Where
find him? I have still the letter from m
mother. I have still all the proofs give
by the Marone. Where is he? where is

"Come, let us sit down by the fire," sa
man, "and I will tell thee more;" and fi
the boy now quite willing to do what he w
the man sat down by the fire with him,
lating the various results of particular li
conduct open before him, but without suf
any one good principle or feeling to min
all with his considerations.

He had spoken the words which had
Ignati to him simply as a matter of im
and the first question he asked himself
whether he should tell the boy more o
truth or not. Various considerations, how
induced him to go on, for he had a little sc
in his head which rendered it expedien
him to embarrass the proceedings of the

de Boisguerin, on the following morning after the deed proposed was done, as much as possible.

"You know, Ignati," he said, "that I always loved you, my good youth."

"You gave me bitter proofs of it," replied Ignati.

"Nay, nay; it was my way," replied the Italian. "If you had been my own son, it would have been the same."

"I dare say," replied Ignati, "you would have murdered your own son almost as readily as you tried to murder me."

"Nay, boy, I tried not to murder thee," rejoined the man. "I was not such a fool; that would never have answered my purpose."

"You did it by halves," said the boy. "But come, Master Orbi, tell me more about this matter you spoke of; and tell me too what brings you here? Where is my father to be found, if, as you say, he is here?"

"He is to be found," said Orbi, "in the great

house by the church of St. Sauveur. I remember him well, for when your mother fled out of Rome before you were born, and was glad to get what assistance she could, she sent me three times back into the city to speak with the Abbé of Laurans, as he was then called."

"And what is he called now?" exclaimed Ignati eagerly. "What is he called now?"

"He is called the Abbé de Boisguerin," replied the man, "or the Seigneur de Boisguerin, as it now is."

"Then I have seen him," cried Ignati. "Then "I have seen him; and he called her——" But the boy suddenly checked himself. "And now, what is it you want here?" he said.

"No harm, Master Ignati," replied the man, with a look half sneering, half dogged. "You seem as grateful as any one else, and as soon as you get all you want, you turn upon one. I suppose you are waiting for your young master coming back from some gay revel, for the whole place seems as silent as if every body were gone to bed but you."

"Oh, no," answered Ignati. "There are six of the Duke's men sitting up in the next room; and all I fear is, that the gentlemen who are with the Duke himself should come out and find you here."

"Then, I suppose, your master is with them," said the Italian.

The boy smiled. "My master is with them," he said, "for my master is the Duke of Guise; but if you mean the young Count who took me from you, he has been gone to bed an hour ago. Ay, Master Orbi, and has two stout men sleeping across his door. I hav'n't forgot that he struck you a blow one day; nor you either, it seems."

"You are out there, Sharp-wits," said the Italian. "I bear the boy no grudge. I got his money, if he gave me a blow into the bargain; so we are quits."

"I doubt you," muttered Ignati to himself; but the man went on without attending to him, saying, "No, no; what I came for really, if you want to know, was to give a letter to a

young lady here, fi
the other side of
Ma'mselle de Clairv

"Ay, she is gor
replied the page.
letter."

"It is of no gre
replied the Italian,
mere pretext. "It
all about a Persian
may take it and gi
is gone to bed now.
it you are not with
The Duke of Guis
Guise! Why, that

"Hush!" cried
the Duke's cabinet
"Hush! get you go
are coming out; and
would not answer fo
either."

The man started u
by which he had e

But he had scarcely made his escape, when the tapestry which covered the doorway into the Duke's cabinet was drawn aside, and the Cardinal de Guise, with the Archbishop of Lyons, and the rest of Leaguers, came forth from their conference with the Duke.

CHAP. XIII.

It is now necessary to turn to other apartments in the château of Blois: namely, a suite inhabited by the King himself. *It comprised* — besides several others both above and below — the King's bed-room, into which opened four doors — one communicating with the Monarch's private staircase, which we have already spoken of — one to the right entering into a small dressing-room — one to the left, which gave admittance to a chamber called the old cabinet — and one communicating by a short and narrow passage with the large chamber, which, during the residence of the King at Blois, was employed as a council-room. The walls of the council-room were bare; but those of the King's chamber and the two cabinets were lined throughout with rich old tapestry.

Before five o'clock on the morning of the

23d of December, Henry had risen from his bed and dressed himself in haste, and as soon as his toilet was completed, one of his valets was dispatched with all speed to bear a message, which had already been entrusted to him. The King then passed out of his dressing-room into his bed-chamber, holding a light in his hand, and approached the door which led to the private staircase. There was eagerness and much anxiety in his countenance, and his eyes were fixed upon the top of the stairs with an intense gaze, which seemed to strain them from their orbits.

At length a heavy foot was heard ascending, and then several more, and in a moment after the head and shoulders of an armed man, carrying a light, appeared at the mouth of the staircase.

"Ah, Laugnac, this is well!" cried the King, as soon as he saw him. "You are punctual and prepared, I see. Whom have you with you?"

"Nine of my most determined fellows, Sire," replied Laugnac. "There is not one, indeed, of the Forty-five that would not shed his life's

blood for your Majes
I know well for me
himself, I believe, if y

As he spoke, half a
appeared, man after
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Laugnac?"

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the cabinet," said th
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them by the back stai

The valet went away with a pale countenance, feeling all the agitation which such events might well produce; and while he was gone, the King, after asking Laugnac if he had explained to his companions what was the task in which they were about to be employed, addressed them all in a short speech, not without eloquence and fire.

When he had concluded, he made Laugnac open one of the large chests which formed the window-seats of his bed-room, and taking thence a number of long, sharp, and well-pointed knives, he gave them with his own hands to the assassins, saying, "Here, gentlemen, are the avengers of your liberty and mine! and I command and authorise you to use them for the punishment of the greatest criminal in my kingdom. Every law, divine and human, requires his death; and where power prevents the ordinary course of justice from taking place, it is a right and a privilege of the sovereign to execute judgment by any means that present themselves! Now, follow me, gentlemen!" And leading them on to the other side of the chamber,

he posted them himself, — the principal part of them in the old cabinet, and the rest behind the arras round the door of the bed-room itself. Most of those even who were in the cabinet were concealed also behind the arras near the entrance, and the door was left open.

By the time this had been arranged a page had entered the King's bed-room, and now informed him that the gentlemen he had sent for had arrived, adding, "Monsieur de Nambu is there also, Sire, saying you told him last night to come at this hour."

"I did, I did," said the King. "Bid them all come up;" and greeting the others briefly, he took Nambu by the arm and led him into the passage which conducted to the council-chamber. Through the door which led thither voices were heard speaking beyond.

"Stay there, Nambu," he said in a whisper, "and let no one pass without my especial order. The council cannot have begun its sitting yet, for it is still dark, I see."

"As I passed by I saw into the room," said Nambu, "and there were none but ushers and

such people: but I heard that the Duke had been sent for according to the commands your Majesty gave last night."

The King then left him, and returned into his room, where he found Laugnac and the rest of the gentlemen, whom he led towards the door of his dressing-room.

"I have taken off my head-piece and cuirass, Sire," said Laugnac, "as I intend to remain here at the door of your Majesty's dressing-room till the matter is settled, and the sight of arms might scare the prey."

"Right, right, Laugnac!" replied the King. "Bid the page send for Revol by the back staircase. We shall want him to fetch the Duke." And, this said, he retired into his cabinet.

The page ran round at once to the door of the council-chamber, where he found Revol just about to enter; and whispering a word to him, the Secretary of State gave the bag of papers which he had in his hand to one of the ushers, bidding him hold it till he returned, and followed the King's domestic, forbidding the ser-

vants, who had accompanied him thither, to go any farther. The spot where they remained was the large open space at the top of the great staircase, and a number of other persons were there collected, while the company of the King's guard might be seen at the foot of the staircase, not, indeed, under arms, or drawn up in regular order, but waiting apparently for the arrival of some one to give them directions.

After the departure of Revol, the statesmen who had been summoned to the council arrived rapidly one after the other. The Cardinal of Vendôme was amongst the first, and then followed the Marshals de Retz and d'Aumont. Some other members of the council came next, and then the Archbishop of Lyons. But still neither the Cardinal de Guise nor the Duke had made their appearance. Time was now wearing on, and occasionally a page, or valet-de-chambre, known to belong to the King, was seen to come and speak with some of the people at the top of the staircase, and then return suddenly.

While this was going on, a boy, bearing the

habiliments of a page of the Duke of Guise, passed along at the foot of the staircase; and, seeing a number of archers of the guard collected there, he ran lightly up the steps and mingled with the various persons collected. He passed rapidly along from one to another, as if he was looking for some person, spoke to two or three of those whose faces he knew, and then hurrying away down the stairs, passed with a step of light to the apartments of the Duke of Guise. He found that Prince just quitting his cabinet and entering the antechamber. A number of gentlemen and officers followed him, but the boy advanced straight towards him with a degree of familiarity, neither insolent nor ungraceful, and kissing his hand said, with his slight Italian accent, "May so humble a being as I am detain your Highness for one moment?"

"What is it, Ignati? Speak!" said the Duke of Guise, "I am already late for the council, my good boy."

"Your Highness promised to grant me any favour I asked," replied the boy, "and as the

greatest at this mor
your Highness alone

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"My Lord," said
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wrong."

The Duke smile
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now."

"Oh, sir, think!"
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entirely upon your safety. What would become of me? What would become of the young Count and his bride, if ——"

"Ay, well bethought," replied the Duke. "Bring me here paper and the ink-horn;" and when the boy brought them, Guise bent down over a large coffer that stood near, and wrote a few lines.

"Take that to the Count," he said, as soon as he had finished writing. "Quick, Ignati: but, after all, these warnings are but nonsense. There is nobody in France dares do it. Look, I have delayed too long. Here comes a messenger from the King."

"As I find your Highness coming," said the usher, approaching the Duke, "it is needless, perhaps, to deliver the King's message: but I was directed to say to your Highness that the council waited, and that His Majesty was extremely anxious that the business of the day should go on, as he wished to proceed to Clery in time for dinner. If your Highness were not well, he said, perhaps you would not object to the council being held without you."

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"But the treasure
that there was not a
Larchant; and the

of his hand, began to mount the stairs, saying, "I will see to it, Larchant; I will see to it."

Larchant and the archers followed him up the steps, still pressing close upon him; and he heard a low deep voice say from the midst of them, "Look to yourself, my Lord Duke, there are bad men abroad!"

The Duke passed on, however, without notice and entered the hall of the council, the ushers drawing back with low bows as he appeared, and throwing open the doors for him to go in. The moment after those fatal doors had closed behind him, the archers drew up across them at the head of the stairs. Larchant hurried away towards the chamber of the King, and Villequier, passing rapidly by, said in a low voice to one of the attendants, "Go down to Monsieur de Crillon, at the Corps de Garde; tell him to shut and guard the gates, as the Duke has gone in."

Though he spoke low, he seemed little to heed who listened to the words; and they were heard by the boy Ignati, who, with the painful conviction that some great evil was

about to befall the Duke, had followed him ste by step to the council-chamber. The boy pu his hand to his brow with a look of painfu anxiety, and darted away once more towards th apartments of the Duke of Guise. The first per- son he met with there was Pericard, the Duke' secretary; and grasping his arm, he exclaimed "They will murder him! they will murder him They are closing the gates of the castle and guarding them!"

Pericard rushed to one of the windows that looked out into the court. "Too true, indeed!" he exclaimed. "Too true, indeed! It may be yet time to save him though. Run quick, Ignati, and get one of the Duke's handkerchiefs while I write." And with a rapid hand he wrote down, — "My Lord, your death is re- solved. They are barring and guarding the gates. I beseech you come out from the hall of the council to your own apartments. We can make them good against all the world, till the town rises to protect you."

Before he had done, the boy was back again with the handkerchief; and enveloping the

note therein, Pericard gave it to him, exclaiming, "Fly, fly with that to the door of the council-chamber, Ignati. The ushers will let you in, surely, to give it to the Duke, if you say that he has forgotten his handkerchief."

"They have let me in before," said Ignati; "but I doubt it now. I will try and make my way at all events."

Again he flew to the top of the staircase, and, as if a matter of course, pushed up towards the door, endeavouring to force his way through the archers."

"Stand back, saucy spright," cried one of the men; "you cannot pass here."

"But I must pass," cried the boy, turning upon him with a fierce air of authority. "I am the Duke of Guise's page, and bring him his handkerchief, which he forgot. Make way, saucy archer, or I will teach you to whom you speak."

"Listen to the insolence of these Guisards," said the man. "But their day is over. Stand back, fool, or I'll knock you down with my partisan."



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matter with your Highness? there is blood trickling over your mustachio."

"The cold has made my nose bleed twice this morning," replied the Duke, and putting his hand in his pocket he said, "My people have been negligent; they have forgotten to give me a handkerchief. St Prix," he continued, turning his head to one of the King's valets-de-chambre, who stood on the inside of the door communicating with the King's apartments. "I wish you would send to my rooms for a handkerchief. You will find some of my people at the door."

"There are plenty, my Lord, belonging to the King," replied St. Prix, "in this little cabinet:" and crossing the hall of the council, he took one out and gave it to the Duke, who thanked him graciously, and still sitting by the fire fell into a deep fit of thought. Suddenly, however, he turned pale; his eyes assumed the same expression as they had done the night before, when he had fancied he saw a figure in the room with him, and taking a small silver bon-

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King's chamber was
of State, Revol, enter
his Majesty wishes to
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commences. You will find him in the old cabinet to the left."

Revol was as pale as death. But the Duke of Guise took not the slightest notice; and, passing through the door, which St. Prix held open for him and closed after him, he advanced towards the chamber of the King.

On entering it he saw Laugnac seated upon the coffer at the farther end of the room; and he remarked, with an angry frown, that the King's attendant did not rise when he entered. He said nothing, however, but turned towards the door of the old cabinet, which was too low to suffer him to pass without bowing his head. He accordingly stooped for the purpose; and, raising the tapestry with his left hand, while he held his hat in the right, he passed on.

He had scarcely taken a step into the cabinet, however, when he at once saw several men in arms standing round. At the same moment there was a sound close to him; and, springing from behind the arras, a fierce and powerful man, named St. Malines, rushed upon him.

The Duke dropped his hat, and moved his hand towards his sword: but at the same moment some one seized the hilt with both hands, and St. Malines struck him a blow with a knife over the left shoulder, burying the weapon in his bosom.

Another and another blow succeeded from the hands of those around him: the blood rushed up into his mouth and throat; but still, with prodigious power, he seized two of those who were assailing him, and dashed them headlong to the ground, exclaiming at the same time, "Ah, traitors!"

Rushing towards the door, he dragged another along with him into the chamber of the King: and seeing Laugnac still there, and marking him as the instigator of his murder, with a brow awful in the struggle of the strong spirit against the power of death, with hands clenched, and teeth set, he darted towards him.

Ere he had taken two steps, however, his brain reeled, his eyes lost their sight, and Laugnac starting up saw, by the fearful swimming of those visionless orbs, that the terrible

deed was fully accomplished, that the life of Guise was at an end; and though the Duke still rushed forward upon him with the convulsive impulse of his last sensation, the Captain of the Quarante-cinq did not even unsheath his sword, but merely struck him a light blow with the weapon in the scabbard, and Guise fell headlong on the carpet by the King's bedside.

The sound of that deep heavy fall was enough, and Henry, coming forth from his cabinet, gazed for several minutes earnestly upon the dead man, while the dark blood rushed forth, and formed a pool round the Monarch's feet.

The countenance of every one there present, lips and cheek alike, were as white as parchment; and for two or three minutes not a word was spoken, till at length the King exclaimed, "What a height he was! He seems to me taller even dead than living!"

Then setting his foot upon the dead man's neck, he cruelly repeated the cruel words which Guise himself had used at the death of Coligny, "Venomous beast, thou shalt spit forth no more poison!"

CHAP. XIV.

From the door of the council-chamber th boy Ignati flew back to the apartments of th Duke of Guise, and the tidings which he brough spread confusion and terror through the whol of the Duke's domestics: but Ignati was of clinging and affectionate disposition, and afte the Duke, his master, his next thoughts turne to Charles of Montsoreau. To his apartment then the boy proceeded with all possible speec having in his hand the note from the Duke c Guise, which he had almost forgotten in th agitation of the late events. He found th young nobleman already dressed, and conclud ing with his attendants various arrangement for his approaching union with her he love — an union, indeed, entirely dependent upo the life of him who was at that very momen falling under the blows of assassins.

With the natural hopefulness of youth and of high courage, Charles of Montsoreau, though still somewhat anxious, had nearly forgotten the apprehensions of the night before. But the terrified countenance of Ignati, and the cut upon the boy's brow from the blow he had received, showed the young Count at once that something had gone wrong; and demanding what was the matter, but without waiting for an answer, he opened the billet of the Duke of Guise, and read.

The words which he found there written were as follows: —

"I have had many warnings, Logères, which personally, it does not become me to attend to. However, should these warnings prove to have been justly given, and you see Henry of Guise no more, take your fair bride with you at once; fly to my brother of Mayenne; be united as soon as possible, without waiting for any ceremony but the blessing of the priest; and, to the best of your power, avenge the death of him who was your friend to the last."

"Where is the Duke, Ignati?" demanded the

young Count, eagerly. "Has he yet gone to the council?"

"He is gone! he is gone!" replied the boy; "and he will never return!" And in a rapid manner he told him all that had taken place, as far as he himself yet knew it.

"Fly to the apartments of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut instantly," said the Count. "Ask if I can speak with her, and give her that note. If she is not in her own apartment, she is in that of the Duchess of Nemours, which is by the side of it. Quick, Ignati; tell her there is not a moment to be lost."

The boy sped away. The Count then gave a few rapid orders to Gondrin, bidding him discover if there was any means of issuing forth from the castle; and then turned his steps, as speedily as possible, towards the chamber of Marie de Clairvaut.

In the narrow passage, however, which led towards the apartments of the Duchess of of Nemours, he was passed by Pericard, the Duke's secretary, who slackened not his pace for an instant, but said, "Fly, sir! Fly! The

Duke is dead!" and rushed on. The next moment, Charles met the fair girl herself, coming towards him with as swift a pace as his own, and followed by the boy Ignati, who from time to time turned back his head, as if to see that they were not pursued. Marie was as pale as death.

"Oh, Charles," she said, "I fear we cannot obey my uncle's commands. What has happened to him, I know not; but the guards have just arrested the Duchess de Nemours and my poor cousin Joinville. It is impossible to pass in that direction, and I fear all the gates are guarded."

"Run to the chapel," said the boy. "Run to the chapel by the back staircase and the little corridor behind the Duke's room. There will be no one in the chapel in this time of confusion, and there is a way from the chapel into the gardens. The postern may be left unguarded."

"Excellently bethought," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "Speed on, Ignati; speed on before us, and see that there is no one on the

watch. If you find G
chapel without a mo
fly, sweet Marie; we
has ordered. It is cle
to say — it is clear
would not have dare
mother had he been li
you some cloak or co
cannot go forth in all

Marie bent down
though she had suffe
few months, it had no
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however, and in his a
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two servants, whom he
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to the farther side of
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gested, he led Marie de Clairvaut towards the chapel, where they were to have been united.

The little corridor which they followed entered at once into a small room, called the revestry, by the side of the chapel itself, and as Charles of Montsoreau approached, he heard voices and paused to listen. He then plainly distinguished the tones of Gondrin and the page; and though another deep voice was also heard, he hurried on, feeling certain that they would have come to give him warning had there been danger.

The door was partly open, and throwing it back, the Count beheld a scene which made all his blood run cold, while the fair girl whom he was leading forward recoiled in terror and dismay.

Stretched upon the floor, with his sword half drawn from the sheath, and a deep wound in his left breast, lay Gaspar de Montsoreau. A pool of blood surrounded him, and the expression of his whole countenance showed in a moment that the spirit had departed some time. Scattered — some upon the ground, some upon the

table in the midst of the room, some even in th midst of the blood itself — were a number pieces of gold; and two leathern bags, one ope and half empty of its contents, were seen upo the ground.

At the further side of the room, near th door leading into the chapel, was standing Gondrin, with his sword naked, and his foo upon the chest of the Italian Orbi; while th boy Ignati knelt beside the assassin, and with his drawn dagger held over him, seemed putting to him some quick and eager questions.

"I tell you true," answered the man, a Charles of Montsoreau entered; "I tell you true. It was he who set me on and paid me the Abbé de Boisguerin, and no one else."

The boy sprang up and moved away on the young Count's appearance; and a few words from Gondrin explained to him, that coming from the gardens — where he had found all solitary, the key in the lock of the postern gate and the way clear — he had heard a low cry from the side of the chapel, and on entering that room had discovered the unhappy Marquis de

Montsoreau weltering in his blood, and the Italian Orbi gathering up some of the gold pieces, which seemed to have fallen to the ground in a brief struggle between him and the Marquis.

During this account, Marie de Clairvaut, pale as death and terribly agitated, supported herself by one of the high-backed chairs, and turned her eyes from the horrible sight which that room exhibited; and Charles of Montsoreau gazed for a moment on the dead form of his brother, with those feelings of fraternal love which no unkindness or ill treatment had been able to banish.

Every instant, however, was precious; and recovering himself as speedily as possible, he turned to Gondrin, bidding him disarm the Italian who had still his sword, though the weapon with which he had committed the murder had been dropped beside the dead body.

"Shall I kill him, sir?" said Gondrin, pressing the man down more firmly with his foot, as he found him make a slight effort to escape.

"Oh, in pity, in pity, Charles," cried Mari
clasping her hands towards him, "do not; d
not!"

"No, no!" replied Charles of Montsoreau
"cut that rope from the window, Ignati. Bin
him hand and foot, Gondrin, and leave him t
the justice of those who come after."

It was done in a moment; and Charles o
Montsoreau only pausing once more for a
moment to gaze on his brother's corpse, ex-
claimed with sincere sorrow, "Alas, poor Gas-
par!" and then with a quick step led Mari
de Clairvaut from that terrible chamber int
the gardens and towards the postern gate.

All was clear, and Charles of Montsoreau
turned the key and threw the gate back.
The moment that it was opened, two men
darted forward from the other side, as if t
seize the person coming out, and in one o
them, though entirely changed in dress and
appearance, Charles instantly recognised th
Abbé de Boisguerin, who, before he saw tha
any one had accompanied Mademoiselle d
Clairvaut, had caught her violently by the arm

The memory of a thousand wrongs flashed upon the young Count's mind in a moment; his sword sprung from the sheath, glittered for a single instant in the air, and then passed through the body of the base man before him, piercing him from side to side.

The Abbé uttered a shrill and piercing cry, and, when the Count withdrew his weapon, fell instantly back upon the ground, quivering in the agonies of death. The other man who had stood beside the Abbé fled amain; but on the road, about fifty yards from the garden wall, stood a carriage with six horses and their drivers, with a group of some nine or ten men on horseback.

On the Abbé's first cry the horsemen began to ride towards the spot, but the appearance of Gondrin coming through the low door behind the Count, and then the page, made them pause, hesitate, and seem to consult. In another moment or two the sound of horses coming from the side of the town caused them to withdraw still farther from the spot; and with joy that is scarcely to be expressed,



[redacted] whispered words of hope Marie de Clairvaut, who cl to his arm.

" Stop the carriage, Gond seeing the drivers in the ac to hasten away after the their part, had taken fligh of the young Count's follo make use of it, whether th promise them large rewards. here I do not understand; some new villany. Come, we must not pause." And to the carriage, he spoke t self.

One of them was the m

Clairvaut was placed in the carriage, the horsemen surrounded it, and Charles himself was about to mount his horse, when he perceived that the boy Ignati had not followed him, but remained kneeling by the side of the Abbé de Boisguerin. Turning quickly back, to his utter surprise he found the youth weeping bitterly; and when he urged him to rise and come with the carriage, Ignati shook his head saying, "No, no! I cannot leave him like dead carrion for the hawks and ravens. — He was my father! Go on, my Lord Count, and God speed you! — I must see him buried, and masses said for his soul!"

The Count was moved, but he could not remain; and giving the boy some money, he said, "Spend that upon his funeral, Ignati; and then follow me with all speed to Lyons. I grieve for you, my boy, though I understand not how this can be."

Only one more difficulty existed, which was, to pass through that part of the town leading to the bridge over the Loire. But the servants who had made their escape from the castle, and brought round their fellows to his assistance,

assured the Count that the news of the Duke of Guise's murder had already spread through the city, and that every thing was in such a state of confusion and dismay, he might pass with the greatest security.

Such he found to be the case; all the guard of the King was within the walls of the château; the gates of the bridges, and of the town itself, were in the hands of the faction of the League: and no questions were asked of one who was known to have been the dear and intimate friend of the murdered Duke.

Taking his way through a part of the country devoted to the League, Charles of Montsoreau and his fair companion found no difficulty in reaching Lyons, where the history of all that had taken place was soon told to the Duke of Mayenne, and the last lines which the hand of Henry of Guise ever traced were shown to him, who was destined thenceforth to be the great head of the League.

Had the words and the wishes of his brother not been sufficient for Mayenne, the necessity of binding to his cause for ever one whose aid

was so important as that of Charles of Montsoreau, would have been enough to decide the Duke's conduct towards him: and as soon as possible, after all the anguish, difficulty, and danger, which they had undergone together, the fate of the young Count of Logères and Marie de Clairvaut was united for ever.

In regard to them it need only be said that they loved each other to the last hours of life.

The boy Ignati followed the young Count to Lyons, but he would not remain with the man who had taken his father's life. He subsequently devoted himself to the church, and in the end rose high, by the great interest that was exercised on his behalf.

The wars of the League succeeded: but the feelings of Charles of Montsoreau were greatly changed by the death of the Duke of Guise; and though he waged war, as zealously as any body could possibly do, against the murderer of his lost friend, yet, when Henry III. himself fell under the blow of an assassin, the young Count of Logères would no longer contend against a monarch so generous, so noble, and

so chivalrous, as the
the throne.

He sheathed the sw
sion of Henri Quatre,
passed in peace and
society of her whom
alone.

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